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Practical Diſcourſe

Concerning

CONVERSION.

I. Shewing the Nature of it.

II. Propounding ſome Motives and Arguments to it: And

III. Giving ſome Directions about it.

Acts 3. 19. *Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreſhing ſhall come from the preſence of the Lord.*

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INTRODUCTION.

'TIS ſad to ſee how willing Men are to abuſe and deceive themſelves in matters of the higheſt moment, how ready to take up with falſe and groundleſs hopes of Heaven: and this is not the caſe only of thoſe who make a fair outward ſhew, but even they that are looſe and extravagant in their lives, and may be known too plainly by their fruits, even many of theſe have hopes of the mercy of God, and ſeem to flatter themſelves, that it will be well with them. So that if we judg according to the vain expectations of Men, we ſhould think our Saviour under a great Miſtake, when he ſaid, *that few ſhould enter in at the ſtrait Gate*; for it ſhould ſeem that men are in vaſt multitudes going heavenward: it ought not therefore to be called a ſtrait, but a wide and open Gate, where ſuch numbers are continually thronging in; nor need our Saviour bid them to ſtrive, for they can attain Heaven in an eaſier way than ever he propounded to them. But what is it that theſe deluded Wretches build upon? They preſume upon the infinite mercy of God, and are very loth to think that a Being of ſo much Cle-

mency and Goodneſs ſhould torment poor Creatures to all eternity. They are told that God is juſt, and will by no means clear the Guilty; that he is holy, and of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity; that he is true, and will certainly make good all his threatnings againſt it. But all this they overlook, and have recourſe only to his Mercy and Goodneſs: They would fain be ſaved in a Courſe of Sin, and ſo frame ſuch a God to themſelves as is for their purpoſe; and if they can allow the higheſt degree of mercy to him, they care not what becomes of the reſt of his Attributes. But they will one day ſee their miſerable folly, and that they ſhall not be judged according to their wild and groundleſs Fancies, but according to the unerring Wiſdom and Juſtice of that God whom they have ſo offended. This is it which is ſo agreeable to the nature of God and to his revealed Will, that all thoſe who know him not, and obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; that Chriſt ſhall come in flaming Fire taking vengeance on them; and this will be the certain doom of all ſuch, whatever they fooliſhly imagin to the contrary. They will then find, to their everlaſting ſhame and ſorrow, that this God will ſeverely puniſh rebellious Sinners. And yet he ſtill remains a God of infinite Mercy;

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for 'tis very high and inconceivable Mercy, that he will ſave any of the race of fallen Man. *Thoſe who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, ſhall have everlaſting Life.* But this is the gracious Gift of God to them, and they are thereby made Partakers of the exceeding riches and fulneſs of his Mercy. But how great a meaſure ſoever of it there may be towards theſe, yet wicked Men are not to expect the leaſt ſhare of it hereafter: indeed whilſt they are here, the goodneſs of God is ſhewed to them in keeping them out of Hell, in affording the means of Grace, and calling upon them by his Word and Spirit; but when they have withſtood all theſe, and their whole life has been a continual reſiſtance of them, do they then expect his Mercy ſhould be ſtretched out to ſave them? This they cannot imagin without very baſe and diſhonourable thoughts of him. Whoever therefore are made ſo happy to partake of future Mercy, they are ſuch as unfeignedly turn to him here: and if they would have ſound hopes, that their *Sins ſhall be blotted out when the times of refreſhing ſhall come from the preſence of the Lord*, they muſt repent and be converted. And 'tis the Deſign of this Diſcourſe to give aſſiſtance in this great Work: It muſt be owned that ſeveral Treatiſes of this kind have been publiſhed, and 'tis hoped with very good ſucceſs; but how ex-

cellent ſoever they may be, there has ſtill been great complaint that there wants ſomething of this nature, which may be of more general uſe, and fitted to the loweſt Underſtandings: whether this Treatiſe be ſo or not, the Reader is the beſt judg. It has been heartily endeavoured to frame it for the uſe of all, and to expreſs the things with as much plainneſs as may be: and that the meaneſt Readers may more eaſily perceive it, I have at the end brought this matter into a much leſs compaſs, and have ſumm'd up the whole as briefly and plainly as I could, hoping that by the reading of it, they may be the better fitted to receive the larger part, which with God's Bleſſing may be of further benefit to them.

A DISCOURSE Concerning CONVERSION.

IN treating of this Subject we ſhall,

I. Shew the nature of Converſion.
II. Propound ſome Motives and Arguments to it: And
III. Give ſome directions about it.

I. To ſhew the nature of Converſion. Converſion ſignifies turning, and that implies ſomething that we turn from, and ſomething that we turn unto. In this Converſion we are turned from a ſtate of Nature to a ſtate of Grace: By a ſtate of Nature I mean that ſtate in which we were all born, which is a ſtate of ſin and enmity to God, which was conveyed to us by *Adam*'s Fall; for as he by his eating the forbidden Fruit fell from that upright holy ſtate in which God had made him, and ſo became an impure ſinful Creature, ſo we which ſprang from him muſt needs partake of the ſame nature: *for who can*

bring a clean thing out of an unclean? And the Scripture aſſures us, that in *Adam* we all fell, and ſo came ſhort of the glory of God. And theſe ſinful Inclinations do too plainly appear in us as we grow up: Our readineſs to that which is evil, and our delight in it, and our hatred of that which is good, do more and more diſcover themſelves: yea our daily Practice plainly ſhews how we ſtand inclined; for out of the abundance of our evil hearts proceed thoſe diſorders in our lives, and thoſe daily actual Tranſgreſſions of the Law of God: while we are in this ſtate, there is no true fear of God before our Eyes, our Lives therefore muſt needs be a continual offence to him.

Now in Converſion there is by the grace of God a mighty change wrought in us, which though it be not in this life full and perfect, yet as to the bent of our Hearts and courſe of our Lives there is a real and effectual turn, ſo that *old things are paſt away, and all things are become new.* This change runs through the whole Man, through all the powers of the Soul and members of the Body.

1*ſt.* This Change is diſcovered in all the powers of the Soul. Now the Faculties or Powers of the Soul are divided into three, the Underſtanding, Will, and Affections; and in every one of theſe this change is plainly ſeen.

1. In the Underſtanding. Before Converſion there is a great darkneſs upon the mind as to ſpiritual matters. *The natural Man perceiveth not the things of God, neither can he, for they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* In this reſpect we are all born blind, and ſo continue, till by the ſpecial Grace of God *the eyes of our underſtanding are enlightned*, and then immediately the ſcales fall off from them, and we receive our ſight. We have now quite other thoughts of things than what we formerly had: Sin is that which heretofore we ſaw little harm in, nay that which was very pleaſant to commit; yea we ſhew'd our love to it by living in the daily practice of it: But now we ſee what a very foul and abominable thing it is, we look upon it to be the worſt of evils, and that all other the moſt loathſome and deformed things in nature come far ſhort of it: We are now ſenſible that nothing makes us ſo vile and wretched as ſin, that it brings us under the greateſt guilt, and juſtly lays us open to eternal Wrath and Vengeance.

We cannot but wonder at our ſelves that we ſhould court that which is our greateſt Enemy, and have ſo good an opinion of that which now we ſee is ſo very fooliſh and unreaſonable, and brings the greateſt ſhame upon us.

We are likewiſe brought to true thoughts of Holineſs. Heretofore we had a very mean eſteem

eſteem of it, and ſaw no reaſon why men ſhould be ſo earneſt about it, and follow ſo hard after it: We were apt to think their Religion proceeded from the weakneſs of their minds, and from want of knowing better; for we our ſelves could find no reliſh or ſweetneſs in that which they are ſo much in love with. But now the caſe is altered, Holineſs is that which appears to us as a moſt deſirable thing, and that which we eſteem above all: We find it to be that which puts our whole frame in order, which in a great meaſure reſtores us to our firſt eſtate, and conforms us to the image of the bleſſed God; which is ſo agreeable to the higheſt reaſon, which makes our Duty our greateſt Intereſt: We are Gainers by it in this World, and in the next receive our full reward: our way to Heaven is very pleaſant; ſo that in order to be happy hereafter, God commands us to be happy here. And theſe are the thoughts we have of Holineſs in this renewed State.

So in reference to Chriſt, how are our thoughts changed! Heretofore *we ſaw no form nor comlineſs in him, we found in him no beauty that we ſhould deſire him: But to us who now believe He is precious.* We never till now had ſuch a ſenſe of the great love of Chriſt to his own, that he ſhould take their nature upon him, and lay down his life for them: that he *who knew no Sin, neither was guile found*

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in his Mouth, ſhould die in our ſtead, who were the moſt vile Offenders, and in ſuch a wonderful manner endear himſelf to us. This great Love of God and Chriſt is very amazing to thoſe who have taſted of it; and tho 'tis that which paſſes all knowledg, yet they with the Angels are continually looking into it, and making freſh Diſcoveries of *the heighth, and length, and depth, and breadth of it, ſo as they are charmed with it, and deſire to know nothing but Chriſt and him crucified.*

Thus we ſee how much their judgment is altered, and how very different their preſent thoughts of things are from what they were before.

2. As to the Will, and what a mighty change is herein wrought! Heretofore we were ſtrongly bent upon Sin, and freely conſented to it: We were always under the ſway of it, and yielding to it: We were not drag'd or hal'd to evil, but our wills and inclinations carried us this way. But now 'tis far otherwiſe, for in this ſtate Sin is that which we cannot comply with; it will be ſtirring in us, and we find too frequent motions to it, but we reſiſt them: indeed ſometimes they are too hard for us, and we are overcome by them, yea our Will is brought over to them, and at this time our conſent is gain'd; but this is againſt the general purpoſe and intention of our Mind, and contrary to our renewed Inclinations.

So

So as to Holineſs, we were ſo far from being deſirous of it, that we had the greateſt hatred to it, and were ſtrongly bent againſt it; but now 'tis that which we are eagerly carried out to, we chooſe it above all things, it has our full conſent; yea we ſo heartily will it, that we are daily hungring and thirſting after it, and think we can never have enough of it. So far the Will is changed.

3. As to the Affections: Heretofore a man's Joy or Sorrow were raiſed according as it went well or ill with him as to the things of this Life. He placed his whole happineſs in this lower World, and thought there was nothing greater to be injoyed, than what was found here: All his hopes and expectations were from hence, here were his utmoſt wiſhes. He would deſire no greater Offer than what the Devil made to our Saviour of all the Kingdoms of this World; yea for one of the leaſt of them he would willingly have fallen down and worſhipped him. As it ſucceeded with him in theſe matters, ſo was he affected.

If his way was proſperous, and he met with a lucky hit, as he calls it, of raiſing himſelf in the World, and of increaſing his Treaſures, how mightily did this tranſport him and fill him with joy! But when he perceives himſelf in danger of tumbling down, how does he tremble with fear! and if by any croſs accident he is brought low, and

and ſtripp'd of theſe earthly Goods, then how does Sorrow overwhelm him! and how does his anger boil againſt thoſe who were any ways the cauſe of his Misfortune! So that 'tis this World alone that does ſo ſtrongly affect him, this ſtirs up and inflames his Paſſions, his whole heart being ſet upon it.

But in this new ſtate the caſe is altered. He now ſees the vanity and emptineſs of theſe things: he is ſenſible that none of theſe in themſelves deſerve his Anger, Fear, Joy, or Grief, and therefore he is little moved by them. He *rejoyces as if he rejoyced not, he weeps as if he wept not, he buys as though he poſſeſſed not, and uſes this world as not abuſing it, wiſely conſidering that the faſhion of it paſſes away.* Set the World before him in all its pomp and glitter, preſent it to him in the moſt inticing manner, yet this will not draw out his Affections to it: for the World is in a great meaſure crucified to him, and he to it; not that every good man is ſo dead to theſe things, as to loſe his taſte and reliſh of them that he may lawfully ſtill retain.

But yet he is apt ſometimes to exceed in this matter, and to ſuffer himſelf to be carried out too far after them; he is not got out of ſight of theſe things, and is ready ſometimes with *Lot*'s Wife to look behind him: he has ſtill ſomething in him of the *firſt man who was of the earth, earthy*; but this he is aware

aware of, and knows it to be his diſeaſe, and therefore 'tis his great burden, and he groans under it: and though he be carried out further than he ſhould or would be, yet this World has not the ſtrength of his affections, his prevailing Love and Eſteem is ſtill for God. He counts it a greater honour to be his Servant, than to be the Emperor of the whole World: his favour and the light of his Countenance is more deſired by him, and more delightful to him than all this World in its greateſt Glory. God is his exceeding great joy, 'tis the delight of his Soul to walk with him; he fears nothing ſo much as to offend him; and nothing is ſo grievous to him as when he has diſpleaſed him: He expreſſes a violent hatred of Sin, and it raiſes much of anger in him; yea the filthy Converſation of others vexes his righteous Soul. So that theſe are the things which now move and moſt ſtrongly affect him. Heretofore God was ſlighted and contemned by him, Sin was delightful and pleaſing to him, and Sinners were his deareſt Companions: but what a ſtrange turn is here! he now loves what he hated, and hates what he loved, and his affections run quite the contrary way.

And thus we ſee what a bleſſed change is wrought in every part and faculty of the Soul: The Underſtanding which is to be our guide is rightly informed, the Will by

by which we move is rightly bent, the Affections by which we are quickened and inlivened are rightly placed.

2*ly.* There is a change alſo in our Bodies. Not that our bodies are in themſelves different from what they were, but that they are made uſe of to far different ends and purpoſes. Heretofore they were imployed in Sin, and made the Devil's Drudges: at beſt we uſed them for no higher purpoſe than to aſſiſt us either in the Pleaſures or Profits of this world. The great care of moſt is to indulge and pamper them, to provide for their reſt and eaſe; and they are very loth to do any thing that might be offenſive or painful to them: And whatever uſe ſuch make of their Bodies, 'tis only for themſelves, they do not reckon that they belong to any other: They eat and drink and ſleep only for their own eaſe and pleaſure; or if they have any further deſign in it, 'tis only to ſtrengthen them for this World, and fit them for the injoyments of it: and all the labours of their Bodies are made uſe of for ſome very baſe and unworthy end, and which ſtill goes no further than themſelves. And this is all the uſe their Bodies are put to; their Bodies, which have within them a reaſonable Soul, to imploy them in better Service, and in more noble deſigns.

But in Converſion 'tis far otherwiſe: We are now ſenſible that we are to glorify God with

with our Bodies as well as with our Souls: That ſeeing he has made them both, and put them together; ſince 'tis by him that both are upheld and maintain'd, 'tis very reaſonable that both ſhould be uſed in his Service, that both ſhould be imployed for thoſe ends and purpoſes for which their great Maker deſigned them; and therefore they *preſent their Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, knowing that this is their reaſonable Service*; as they formerly uſed *their Members Servants to uncleanneſs and to iniquity unto iniquity, even ſo now they yield their Members Servants to righteouſneſs unto holineſs*; they are ſenſible that *their Bodies are now the Members of Chriſt, that they are the Temple of the Holy Ghoſt*: 'tis therefore their care to keep them clean and pure, that they may be in ſome meaſure meet for that Divine Gueſt to dwell in. The ſeveral Members are made uſe of for God's ſervice in their particular places: The Eye beholds the wonders of the Creation, and is a means to bring us to admire the Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs of the Great Maker of all things: there is *a covenant made* with this Member, that it gives no way to impure glances, nor gaze on any thing that may be a means to defile the mind or body. The Ear is open for the hearing the word of God in publick, and liſtening to the wiſe Sayings, and wholeſom Diſcourſes of thoſe with whom we do converſe: and here alſo great

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care is taken that nothing be at any time let in which may tend to corrupt our manners.

Our Mouths are imployed in ſetting forth the Praiſes of God, and in ſpeaking well of his Name; in declaring to others in an humble manner *what God has done for our Souls*, that ſo they may taſte and ſee that the Lord is gracious; in reproving, exhorting and counſelling thoſe with whom we have to do: and we are watchful that *no corrupt Communication comes out of our mouths; that we ſpeak the truth from our heart*; that our anger vents not it ſelf in unſeemly language: and though we are careful to keep every Member in due order, yet we eſpecially beg of God that he would *ſet a watch before our mouths, and keep the door of our lips*, not knowing how much evil may come by giving this unruly Creature its full liberty. We are told that *the Tongue is a Fire, a World of Iniquity: ſo is the Tongue amongſt our Members; that it defileth the whole Body, and ſetteth on fire the courſe of Nature, and is ſet on fire of Hell; that it is an unruly Evil, full of deadly poiſon.*

It is our daily care that in all our bodily actions God be ſerved. If we eat and drink, 'tis to his Glory, and to enable us for his work: if we labour in our Callings, 'tis in obedience to his command, and to procure to our ſelves a convenient part of this world, whereby we may ſtill be carrried on in his Service: if through the bleſſing of God up-

on our induſtry, or through his kind Providence to us by other ways, we are poſſeſſed of a good ſhare of theſe things, we look upon our ſelves not as Owners, but as his Stewards: and ſince he has told us how a great part of them ſhould be diſpoſed of, in obedience to his Orders we *deal out to the hungry, we clothe the naked*, and eſpecially we *diſtribute to the neceſſity of Saints*, knowing *that inaſmuch as we do it to the leaſt of theſe, we do it to him*; and that in giving to theſe we do but lend to him who will plentifully repay us. So that in the whole we ſee what a happy alteration there is in every renewed Perſon. His Soul is intirely brought over to God, and the Body which is but a Servant to the Soul, and under the guidance of it, is imployed wholly for the uſe and ſervice of their common Lord and Maſter.

Now that all this is done by the mighty Power of God, there needs no proof; tho we are to ſtrive and labour in it, and have great incouragement thereto, yet without God's Bleſſing and Aſſiſtance 'twill be all in vain. 'Tis he that gives to will and to do in Converſion as well as after it: *Turn thou us, O Lord, and ſo ſhall we be turned*, but not till then. Nor does God confine himſelf to a certain fixed Method in bringing this Work about: ſometimes he ſtrikes the Sinner down and lays him at his Feet, and preſently raiſes him up and gives him comfort; ſo that this

this work is in a ſhort ſpace effected, as we ſee it was in *Paul.* But uſually he does it by degrees, but neither here does he always take the ſame courſe: ſome he brings into great terror, and keeps them for ſome time under it; and theſe are ſuch many times as have been notorious Offenders. Others he applys himſelf to in a milder and gentler way; he conquers and ſubdues them, but with much tenderneſs; gives them ſome ſmall glimpſe of his favour, and chears them at the firſt, and as ſoon as they are turning to him, he runs to meet them: and ſo graciouſly orders it, that this indulgence of his towards them does not heighten or embolden them, but ſerves the more to ſoften, to melt, and to humble them; it brings them into the greater ſorrow and debaſement, when they conſider they have offended ſo tender a Father, and who is ſo ready to receive them. But which way ſoever he brings it about, this is the certain effect of it, that there is a thorow change in heart and life, that they unfeignedly turn to God, and their deſire and endeavour is to pleaſe and ſerve him.

And by all it plainly appears that a great deal more is neceſſary to a ſound Converſion, than men generally imagin; and that true Religion is another ſort of thing than what the moſt of Men account it: For indeed if Men are fair and honeſt in their dealings, and give to every one their own; if

they are ſober and temperate, if they are kind and charitable, if they are conſtant at their Prayers, and the like: in ſhort, if they are not guilty of open notorious Sins, but ſo behave themſelves as to have a fair Character among their Neighbours, they think this is enough. They value themſelves highly upon theſe qualities, and doubt not but their ſtate is good, and injoy the comfort of it. In this perſwaſion they many times paſs their whole lives, and find not out the Cheat till they are paſt remedy. And we have reaſon to fear that this is the ſad caſe of many, that abundance are gone down into that bottomleſs Pit with this falſe hope. Why ſo preciſe, ſay they? what need ſuch great ſtrictneſs, and why ſo much ado about Religion? What mean Men thus to diſquiet and diſturb themſelves, and put themſelves to ſuch labour and coſt, when Heaven may be had at an eaſier and cheaper rate?

But the Scriptures inform us otherwiſe, for they tell us that we muſt *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*; *that we muſt give all diligence to make our Calling and Election ſure*; *that we muſt be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*; *that whatever our hand finds to do we muſt do it with all our might*. Theſe and innumerable other places there are to the ſame purpoſe. The life of a Chriſtian is compared to a Warfare, a Race, a Wreſtling, to every thing almoſt that requires

quires the moſt earneſt ſtriving and the utmoſt ſtretch. Yea 'tis ſtrange to ſee by what variety of expreſſions, the hardſhip and labour, and eagerneſs of a Chriſtian's life is ſet forth in Scripture; and they muſt wholly lay aſide their Bibles who think to go to Heaven with little pains.

But 'tis worth our while to examin their Pretences, and inquire into the nature of their Religion, that ſo we may diſcover the falſeneſs of it, and be further inlightened and confirmed in the Truth. They boaſt mightily of themſelves that they ſhew a better face, and make a much fairer appearance in the World than many others. But do not theſe Virtues which they make ſuch a ſhew of proceed often from their natural temper; and are they not agreable to their Conſtitutions, and for this very reaſon embraced by them? They are temperate; but it may be they have not the leaſt inclination to that brutiſh Sin of Drunkenneſs, or their weak Bodies may not allow them to drink to exceſs, and cannot bear the Diſorders of Nature, which it will bring upon them: They call themſelves meek and patient, but poſſibly they are of ſuch a dull heavy temper that nothing ſcarcely will move them: They are kind to their Neighbours, this alſo may proceed from their frame and temper, which naturally diſpoſes them to all Kindneſs and good Offices. Yea they are very charitable and liberal to thoſe

that are in want; but the pity and tenderneſs of their Natures may urge them to it, ſo that in relieving others they do but relieve themſelves. No doubt but the Virtues of many Men are much owing to their Tempers, and on this account become even neceſſary to them, yet there may be other cauſes of it: it may proceed from the ſtrictneſs of their education; they have been otherwiſe taught and inſtructed from their youth, and this many times keeps an awe upon them, and the impreſſions of it are not eaſily worn out.

They may alſo perform their fine Actions to gain credit and eſteem in the World, and to keep a fair Character among their Neighbours: on theſe and many other grounds they may be tempted to Virtue, and yet not be true to it: indeed a ſtander-by ought to be very cautious how he judges them, for the hearts of Men are known only to themſelves: let every one ſearch therefore into himſelf, and look carefully how it is within; let them examin what it is that moves and carries them in their whole courſe of Sobriety and Honeſty; whether it be not from one of theſe fore-mentioned cauſes, or for ſome other by-ends and reſpects. Can they truly ſay that all theſe Actions are performed out of a true fear of God, and love to him? Is it their daily care and ſtudy to approve themſelves to him in all they do? and does all proceed from a due ſenſe

of

of their Duty, and in hearty obedience to his Commands? *not as men-pleaſers, but in ſingleneſs of heart, fearing God.* Have they reſpect to all the Commands of God, and do they not give way to one darling Luſt? Are they ſenſible how vaſtly ſhort they come of their Duty even at the beſt? how exceedingly polluted their pureſt Services are, and what need they ſtand in of the blood of Chriſt to procure their pardon? And do they heartily apply themſelves to him for it? Is it their earneſt deſire that God would *create in them clean hearts, and renew right ſpirits within them?* And is it their great care to keep themſelves from inward as well as from outward filthineſs? Do they watchfully reſiſt the motions to Sin, and ſuppreſs the deſires of it, and avoid whatever tends to it, or has the appearance of it? Is holineſs of heart and life that which they earneſtly long for and endeavour after? and are they ſo ſenſible of their ſmall Attainments, that they are daily preſſing after further degrees and meaſures of Grace? Do they take God for their whole Portion, and can they ſincerely ſay with *David*, that there is none in Heaven or Earth that they deſire beſides him? Do they place their truſt and confidence in him? Do they prize Communion with him in this world, and long for the full injoyment of him in another?

Now if it be not thus with them, we may ſay of them as *Peter* of *Simon Magus*, that

their *Heart is not right in the ſight of God:* for a ſound Converſion contains all this, and 'tis all neceſſary to a ſtate of Grace. If therefore they come ſhort here, all their Honeſty, Temperance, Charity, Meekneſs, and whatever good qualities they may have will profit them nothing. Nay if they were never ſo conſtant in Prayer, Hearing, Converſe with good men, and the like, 'twill be of no benefit to them if not rightly performed. And 'tis to be feared that upon due ſearch they will find themſelves very ſhort in many particulars: For,

Do they not content themſelves with what they have already gotten, and reſt here? as if their Luſts were ſufficiently mortified, and their Graces needed no increaſe. The moſt eminent Saint who no doubt had gone very far in mortifying Sin, yet cries out, *O wretched Man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this Body of Death!* and though he had arrived to vaſt heights of Holineſs, yet had *forgot what was behind* (as not worth taking notice of) *and was preſſing forward.* But theſe ſeem to think themſelves mortified enough, and holy enough, and are willing to abide where they are.

And do they not content themſelves with an outward Shew, and a fair Converſation, when in the mean time their Hearts are neglected, and their Thoughts have full liberty, and the inward workings of Sin are allowed?

Do

Do they not ſmile upon their own Services and think that God is as well pleaſed with them as themſelves are? And though they beg that he would accept of them in Chriſt, yet is it not more from cuſtom than otherwiſe, and without a ſenſe of their own vileneſs, and weakneſs of their Services, which, though they were much better perſormed, ſtand ſo much in need of the great Mediator? And laſtly, Do they not act from a wrong Principle in all their Actions? Is it not to be approved of men, or to ſatisfy their Conſciences (which it ſeems will be contented with a ſmall matter) or from ſome other cauſe which will not bear them out? Can they appeal to the Great God, who ſearches the Heart and tries the Reins, that they have regard to him in whatever they go about? For herein lies the Life, and Spirit, and Power of Religion, in a holy Fear and Love of God, in a continual aim at his Honour, in a hearty deſire to ſerve and pleaſe him in what we do.

Not that Religion reſts here; but where this is deeply implanted in the Soul, it cannot but in a lively manner expreſs it ſelf in the practice, it will break out in the converſation, and appear in a holy and fruitful life. Theſe are the true and proper Motives from within, which will be urging and provoking to the greateſt diligence and ſwiftneſs in the ways of God: and thus our Services will be accepted

accepted of him in Chriſt, through whom alone we expect it. But where theſe are wanting, if a man be never ſo laborious and preciſe in his outward walk, 'tis all utterly loſt.

'Tis ſad to obſerve how willing Men are to flatter themſelves in this caſe, and how difficult 'tis to convince them of their great Miſtake: for they are always comparing themſelves with the lewd and debauched ones, and thanking God that they are no Drunkards, no Swearers, no Whoremongers, and the like: So that ſetting theſe vile Wretches by them for a Foil, they look upon themſelves as Saints, and even ſuch as *need no repentance*, little conſidering that they are both moving the ſame way, and will both have the ſame doom if they abide here. Let ſuch therefore carefully look into themſelves, and they will find that they have all this while been mightily in the wrong, that they have miſerably abuſed and cheated themſelves, and that *this their way was their folly*. They may ſoon ſee that what they prided themſelves ſo much in, was but the ſhadow and appearance of Religion: There was ſomething in them that had a reſemblance of it to the eye, but 'tis like a fine marble Statue, with all the figure and ſhape of a man, the Limbs of his Body and Features of his Face, but yet for want of life is no other than a piece of carved ſtone. And thus much for the nature of Converſion.

II. The

II. The ſecond thing is to propound ſome Motives or Arguments to Converſion.

1*ſt*. And the firſt ſhall be taken from the nature of Converſion, which is a turning from Satan unto God: We ſhall therefore ſhew,

1. What great reaſon we have to turn from Satan.

2. What reaſon we have to turn to God.

To begin with the firſt.

1. What reaſon we have to turn from Satan. 'Tis ſaid that *he rules in the Children of diſobedience, that they are led captive by him at his pleaſure:* and he is called *the God of this World:* and 'tis a dreadful thing to conſider how great a part of it is under his dominion, yea that there is ſcarcely any corner of it wherein he does not ſeem to reign and triumph; God in his juſt judgment to fallen Man ſuffering it ſo to be. But what a miſerable thing is it to be under ſuch a Ruler, to be Drudges and Vaſſals to this accurſed Fiend, the moſt cruel and malicious Tyrant, who goes about continually ſeeking whom he may devour; whoſe buſineſs and deſign is to work our utter ruin, and who is continually deviſing one means or other in order to it? If there be any comfort to him under his preſent Torments, 'tis this, that ſuch vaſt numbers of men are running headlong into that everlaſting fire prepared for him and his Angels:

He

He is always with us, and ready at every turn to inſnare us; in lying down or riſing up, at our Table or worldly Imployments, in all our Duties and Services, ſtill he is ready to attend us, and is always at our elbows. There are a ſort of men that are wholly under his Government, and altogether at his beck: he ſays to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; and to another Servant, Do this, and he doth it; who have ſerved him ſo many years, neither have they at any time tranſgreſſed his Commandment. He draws them to all exceſs of riot, and to commit Iniquity with greedineſs, and brings them to ſuch a wretched perfection of wickedneſs, till he has transformed them into his own nature, and made them little better than Devils in Mens ſhape. But this way will not work with all, and therefore he ſutes his Temptations accordingly. He conſiders what every Man's temper and inclinations are, and how he ſtands diſpoſed, and ſutably applies himſelf to them. If they are ſuch as are frighted at the ſight of great Sins, he lets them alone, and carries them on in that courſe of Sin which is moſt agreable to them. Nay if he ſees that they are ſober, honeſt, meek, charitable, and the like, he moleſts them not; he knows they can ſerve his purpoſe in this way as well as any other. He perſwades them that their courſe is right, and that they are in a ſure way to Heaven; and

thus

thus he flatters and blinds them, that they are not aware of his devices till they meet him in the next world. Thus he becomes all things to all Men, not as St. *Paul* did for their edification, but for their eternal Damnation.

Now how diſmal a thing is it to be under the power of ſuch a one! And yet this is the caſe of every one in an unconverted ſtate: he is one of the Devil's Subjects and Servants; yea they are his Children, and every wicked Man may be ſaid to be of his Father the Devil. If therefore you would not have one to govern you who is the moſt fierce and cruel Tyrant, and who has the greateſt hatred and enmity to you; if you would not have one to be your Counſellor who watches all opportunities to inveigle and betray you, nor one to lead and guide you, who will be ſure to drag you into Hell; then turn from Satan, and endeavour ſpeedily to get out of his clutches, for 'tis he that would do you all this miſchief. And as you are to turn from Satan, ſo turn to God: which brings me to the 2*d* part of this Argument, to ſhew

2. How highly reaſonable it is that we ſhould turn to God. 'Tis he that has the moſt abſolute right to us, 'tis to him in a very ſtrict ſenſe that we owe our whole ſelves. If we conſider what it is that gives any one authority over another as a King, as a Parent, or as a Maſter, all this we ſhall find to be in God in the higheſt degree.

1. A King has Authority over his Subjects. And 'tis very reasonable they should be subject to him. 'Tis altogether necessary there should be publick Government, for without it the World would soon run into confusion and ruin: and 'tis fit that he in whose hands the Government is placed, should be obeyed. But if our earthly Governours have a right to us, how much more has God who is the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? 'tis he that has set them over us; he gives them their right to us, and therefore he himself must needs have a Title to us above all. By his Command we are to be subject to them, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience sake; much more are we bound to be so to him in all things. Their Commands are no further to be obeyed than as they agree with his; but his Commands are wholly to be complied with, without the least exception. Whatever Disputes there may have been about the Titles of some Princes to their Crowns, yet this we are sure of, that God is the most rightful Soveraign of the whole World. Let us then turn unfeignedly to him, and let him rule us whose right it is. *The Lord is our Judg, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, Isa.* 33. 32. Let us therefore be wholly subject to him.

2. The relation of a Father gives him Authority over his Children; *Children obey your Parents in the Lord*; and the Apostle tells us this

this is right; 'tis in it ſelf fit and juſt: the very Law of Nature requires that all Honour and Reſpect, all Duty and Obedience be paid to them. For 'tis they that in ſome ſort have given us our Beings, and in a large ſenſe we may ſay that they are our Makers: beſides, 'tis they that take the care of us in our infancy, when we are unable to help our ſelves. We ſubſiſt by them, and next under God, 'tis by their care we are preſerved; they make it their buſineſs to fit us for our Place and Calling in the World, and ſo to diſpoſe of us as may be moſt to our benefit and comfort: ſo that on theſe accounts they have a full right to us, and may juſtly challenge from us all duty and obſervance. But in all theſe reſpects how much more is God a Father to us, than our earthly Parents can be? For,

Though we do proceed from them, yet who made them and their Fathers, and ſo upwards to our firſt Father *Adam?* Was not he immediately form'd by God himſelf, and therefore very fitly called by St. *Luke* the Son of God? and if God was his Father, he may in a very ſtrict ſenſe be called ours. Further, 'tis God that made uſe of our Parents to bring us into the World, they are his Inſtruments, and 'tis by his Order and Providence that we have a being: *Children and the fruit of the Womb are an Heritage of the Lord*; 'tis not as our Parents will, but as he pleaſes. 'Tis

'Tis he that has appointed every one his being in the World, and has fixed the number of Men, ſo that there can be no more nor leſs than what he from all Eternity has decreed.

Further yet, what we have conveyed to us by our Parents, is nothing but our Bodies, and that is much the viler and groſſer part of us: 'Tis our Souls that make us Men, and in ſo great a meaſure diſtinguiſh us from the Brutes: The ſhape indeed and uprightneſs of our Bodies, and the curious inward frame of them, ſhews us to be ſomething of a better mould; but 'tis our Soul that chiefly raiſes us, and gives us ſuch a likeneſs to our Maker. Now this is Gods own work, and our Parents are herein no way concerned; by his own immediate power he makes them, and joins them to our Bodies; the beſt therefore and nobleſt part of our Being is his intirely, and in a ſingular manner he is the *Father of our Spirits:* ſo that on this firſt account he has abundantly the right of a Father to us, *we being all his Offspring.*

The other thing we are ſo much beholden to our Parents for, is their care of us through our whole life. But how much more is God concerned in this alſo: for is it not he that hath put in them that natural tenderneſs and affection which they have to their own Children, that eager deſire and yerning of their Bowels towards them? Is it not he that enables them to provide for them, and has inclined

and

and diſpoſed them ſo to do? So that though all love and thankfulneſs are due to our Parents on this account, yet we muſt ſtill look up to God as our chief Father. Our earthly Parents in reſpect of God are but as Nurſes to us, we are by his appointment committed to their charge, and he affords them what is convenient for their and our ſubſiſtence, and makes it as much their Duty as our Comfort to provide for us. But if after all, this gives them ſuch a right to us, and 'tis ſo much our Duty to be ſubject to them, then how much more do we owe to God himſelf! And if ſuch dreadful threatnings are denounced againſt diſobedience to Parents, as that *the eye that mocketh at his Father, and deſpiſeth to obey his Mother, the Ravens of the Valley ſhall pick it out, and the young Eagles ſhall eat it:* If it ſhall be thus with Children who are diſobedient to their earthly Parents, what then will become of thoſe who renounce the Authority of God, and deny his right; as all thoſe do who turn not to him?

3. Conſider the Authority that Maſters have over their Servants. God in his wiſe Providence has made different Orders and Ranks of Men, and placed ſome in a higher, ſome in a lower Station: The one cannot ſupport themſelves in their preſent ſtate without the aſſiſtance of Servants; the Servant cannot provide for himſelf the conveniences of this World, without the help of his Maſter;

ſo that God has made them neceſſary to one another: In the mean time 'tis very reaſonable that he who has ingaged himſelf as a Servant, be obedient to his Maſter, and his Maſter has a juſt right to his beſt Service by the Command of God: but 'tis to God that Servants are to approve themſelves in their obedience to their Maſters: they are to ſerve them not with *Eye-ſervice, as Men-pleaſers, but in ſingleneſs of heart, fearing God.* So that ſtill they have a higher Maſter in Heaven, to whom their ſervice is to be performed; ſo thoſe Servants that have their Maſter's Goods committed to them, they are not to purloin, but to ſhew all good fidelity: they are not to waſte or ſquander them away, but be careful to preſerve them; and if they are Stewards, whatever their Maſter has intruſted them with, they are faithfully to improve it for his uſe and ſervice: And are we not much more bound to do ſo for our great Lord and Maſter? We are not fooliſhly to think that what he has conferred upon us is our own, the right is ſtill in him, and is to be uſed wholly for him. He has ſo given to ſome more Talents, to ſome leſs, and Talents of ſeveral ſorts and kinds: but whatever they are, he expects that there ſhould be an anſwerable improvement to what we have received: So that in this relation we ſee how much greater right God has to our Service than our earthly Maſters.

Upon

Upon the whole we cannot but acknowledg the moſt juſt Authority of God over us; and that whatever our King, our Parents, our Maſters demand from us, 'tis all due to God in a far higher degree: and let this move us to turn to him, and give him our ſelves, who are ſo much his own.

And we may further conſider how happy a thing it is to have God for our Friend, and what unſpeakable advantages will come to us thereby. On the other ſide, how dreadful to have him for our declared Enemy, to have his Face ſet againſt us, and his Wrath and Vengeance poured out upon us in the greateſt meaſure. But of theſe more afterwards.

And thus much for this firſt Argument taken from the nature of Converſion.

Motive 2. Let the gracious Calls and Invitations of God move you to turn to him. This is indeed the deſign of the whole Bible, to ſhew us our way to God, and to draw us to him. And with what earneſtneſs does God call upon us and invite us; *Ezek.* 33. 11. *Say unto them, As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will you die O Houſe of* Iſrael? He aſſures us that he takes pleaſure in the Converſion and Salvation of Men, and delights in their return to him, and withal lets them know that if they turn, they ſhall live; if they turn not, they ſhall

die: by the one they ſhall be made infinitely happy, by the other unſpeakably miſerable. See alſo how he applies himſelf to Sinners, in *Iſa.* 1. 18. *Come and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord:* In what a friendly familiar manner does God converſe with us! he ſeems to lay aſide his Majeſty, and in an extraordinary manner to condeſcend to us, to ſpeak to us as it were *face to face, and as a Man ſpeaketh to his Friend,* as 'tis ſaid he did with *Moſes.*

Let us reaſon together. That the great God of Heaven and Earth ſhould ſtoop ſo low as thus to argue the caſe with poor Mortals, and vile Wretches, and in ſuch an indearing manner addreſs himſelf to them: For ſee what follows, *Tho your Sins be as Scarlet, they ſhall be white as Snow; tho they be red as Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool.* This is a comfortable way of reaſoning with them indeed; he declares his readineſs to pardon their greateſt Sins, and fully to forgive them, and, as he elſewhere expreſſes it, to *caſt them into the depth of the Sea,* ſo that they ſhall riſe up no more againſt them: Thus does God deal with us, to allure and draw us to himſelf; ſo *Iſa.* 55. 1, 2, 3. *Ho every one that thirſteth, come you to the waters,* &c. How graciouſly does he there invite them! and what ſweet and precious Promiſes are made to them! And the like in many other places: yea he ſends his Meſſengers on the ſame errand, who *are Ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech us by them; they pray*

us in Chriſts ſtead to be reconciled to God. And ſhall all this be to no purpoſe? Shall God ſo earneſtly argue with us by himſelf, and others in his name? Shall he call and beſeech us, and we ſtop our ears againſt him? Shall we ſlight his Intreaties, and neglect ſuch kind Offers, and turn our backs upon him? How heinouſly will he take it? For this is not only the greateſt Folly, but the height of Diſobedience. If God had only given us leave to come to him, 'twere a very provoking thing to refuſe it: but when he calls upon us, when he urges and entreats us, for us then to ſay to him, Depart from us; this is ſuch an affront to him as cannot be expreſſed: for in thus doing, we either queſtion his good Intentions to us, and whether he means us well in it; or elſe we deny his Wiſdom, as if he did not know what is beſt for us, ſo well as we do for our ſelves. Now either of theſe are very horrid to ſuppoſe: for to deny his Faithfulneſs, or his Wiſdom, is to deny him to be God, and yet this does every one that refuſes to come in at his call. Well therefore may he ſay to ſuch, *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed; I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.*

Motive 3. Conſider the neceſſity of Converſion in order to Salvation; *Unleſs a Man be born again he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God: If any Man be in Chriſt*, that is, if

any one be united to him, and have a ſaving Intereſt in him, *he is a new Creature*; he muſt be renewed in heart and life: for, as it follows, *Old things are paſt away, and all things are become new. Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* 'Tis the expreſs Will of God that it ſhould be thus, and indeed our own reaſon may convince us of this Truth.

For can we imagin that God ſhould admit any man to Heaven, who has refuſed his Government here on earth; who has neglected and deſpiſed his Laws, ſet at nought all his Counſel, and would none of his Reproof, that lived without the love or fear of him? Is it likely that thoſe who have ſaid to God, *Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledg of thy Truth*; that have deſired to keep at the furtheſt diſtance from him whilſt they were here, that he ſhould hereafter take theſe into his preſence, and ſet them at his right hand; that ſuch ſhould be his Favourites, and made for ever happy with him? Or can it enter into our thoughts that the Lord Jeſus, whom they have ſo much deſpiſed and undervalued, yea whom they have in ſome ſenſe *crucified afreſh, and trodden under foot, counting his Blood an unholy thing*; that ſuch as theſe ſhould receive that Sentence from him, *Come, ye Bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you?* No ſurely 'twill be the quite contrary, *Depart from me ye curſed: Thoſe mine Enemies that would not that I ſhould reign over them, bring them hither, and ſlay them before me.* Fur-

Further, do we think that the holy and pure God will give ſo much countenance and incouragement to Sin, as to make the Sinner happy hereafter? We ſee how Sin every where abounds, notwithſtanding the terrible threatnings of God's Wrath and Vengeance againſt it: but what a dreadful place of filthineſs and villany would this World be, if men were under no reſtraint or check by the fear of future Puniſhment, and eſpecially if they knew that Sin would be no bar to their happineſs hereafter! This cannot therefore conſiſt with the holy Nature of God; far be it from him to do after this manner.

But ſuppoſe that God ſhould bring ſuch a Man into Heaven, What ſhould he do there? Is the work of Heaven ſutable to him? Are there any Purchaſes of Lands there to be had for the Mony'd-man, or any high Place in the Courts of Princes for the Ambitious? Will the ſenſual Man find thoſe delicious Meats and Drinks, thoſe beautiful Women, thoſe jolly Companions, and that variety of Diverſions which were ſo pleaſing to him here? No ſurely. No Pleaſures of that ſort are to be found there. The entertainments of Heaven are quite of another kind: The buſineſs there is to be admiring and adoring God in the greateſt height, to be *ſinging Praiſes to him that ſits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* Now if the wicked Man ſhould be admitted into this Company, and forced to

abide amongſt them, how tedious and irkſom would this be! and how uneaſy would he be under it! Heaven would be a place of Puniſhment and Miſery to him; call it what you will, 'twould be a Hell to him. So that he that lives and dies in ſuch a ſtate, is altogether uncapable of Heaven; and either God muſt make a Heaven on purpoſe for him, ſuch a one as is furniſhed with all theſe ſenſual delights; or elſe he muſt change his nature before he is admitted there, to fit him for that Heaven which is prepared for good Men. But we have not the leaſt ground to expect either of theſe, and they muſt have very mean and unworthy thoughts of God who can ſuppoſe it. Turn therefore to God here, as ever you hope to be happy with him hereafter. There is no other way to Heaven, as the Word of God plainly tells us, and as the nature of the thing neceſſarily requires.

Motive 4. Hence therefore it follows that Converſion is a thing of the greateſt moment, and juſtly requires our greateſt care. On this depends our eternal Welfare. This is the thing which moſt nearly concerns us, what will become of us when we ſhall leave this world, and enter into an eternal ſtate. As for this life, how ſhort is it! We are but of yeſterday, and muſt be gone to morrow. We are at great uncertainties, and may be ſnatch'd away this monent. But if our time ſhould be ſpun out to a very old age, alas

alas what is this? 'tis but *as a watch in the night, as a tale that is told, as an hand-breadth.* We are as Bubbles, as Flowers, as a Shadow, and compared to every thing that is of ſhort continuance: What matter is it then how it fares with us in this ſhort periſhing ſtate? whether our place in the world be high or low, whether we are rich or poor, whether we have the frowns or favour of Men? nor is it of great moment whether we are in health or ſickneſs, at eaſe or in pain, in eſteem or reproach; for be it how it will, all will ſoon have an end and die with us. But this ſhould be our chief care, what will become of us when *our duſt ſhall return to the earth as it was, and our Spirit to God that gave it:* How it will fare with us in the other world, when time ſhall be no more, and where we muſt ſpend a whole Eternity. In matters of this world things that are moſt laſting are moſt regarded by us. When in a journy we come to our Inn, we are not much concerned what our Lodging or Diet is, or any other accommodations we meet with there: becauſe we know our ſtay there is ſhort, and though it be ſomewhat inconvenient, 'tis preſently over; we take things as we find them, and paſs home, and there 'tis we expect to have all Conveniences, becauſe our abode is there. Thus it ſhould be with us in reference to another world, *The faſhion of this paſſes away,* but that *endures for ever:* And ſeeing that this eternal State will be

be extremely happy or miſerable to us, let us indeavour to flee from the wrath to come, to make our peace with God, that ſo it may be well with us, and our Souls ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus. And this muſt be done by Converſion: Is it not then a thing of the greateſt moment? Is it an indifferent matter to us whether we turn to God or not; that is, whether we be ſaved or damned? certainly 'tis that which ſhould mightily take up our thoughts, and ſtrongly affect us. One would think we ſhould be ſo very intent upon this matter, that we ſhould forget to eat our bread, and that all the things of this world ſhould lie neglected: that our minds ſhould be wholly poſſeſſed with it: that when we go to bed, we ſhould fear leſt we ſhould awake in Hell, and God ſhould ſay to us, *Thou Fool, this night ſhall thy Soul be taken from thee:* When we are in our worldly buſineſs, that ſome accident or other ſhould ſend us to our long-home. We ſhould ſtand amazed at our ſelves that we have ſpent ſo much of our time, and not thought of this great thing till now. Say therefore to thy ſelf, Have I been all this while at the Pits brink, and never ſaw my danger? Have I been hitherto poſting towards Hell, and yet went on as merrily as if all were well? Have the trifles of this periſhing world taken up all my time and care, and has the vaſt concern of my immortal Soul lay neglected? O my great

great folly and ſtupidity! That ever there ſhould have been ſuch a careleſs and inconſiderate Wretch!

And let not ſuch thoughts as theſe wear off or cool, but keep them warm and ſtirring, till they have ſome good effect, and raiſe up in you ſutable Reſolutions. Well, here is to be no trifling or delay, my All lies at ſtake: and ſince Converſion is of ſo great moment to me, I am fully purpoſed by the grace of God to ſet about it; and I will give no ſleep to my eyes, nor ſlumber to my eye-lids, till ſomething be done in order to it.

Motive 5. Conſider the miſeries of the unconverted. If thou haſt any feeling, and thy Conſcience is not altogether benummed and ſeared, thou wilt need no greater a tormentor than thy ſelf: Thy Heart will ſmite thee, and be continually chiding and upbraiding thee, and no Company can be more diſturbing to thee than thy own mind: thou wilt be in continual trouble and uneaſineſs, and *all thy life long in bondage through the fear of death*, and of that which follows it. And no doubt but this has been the caſe of moſt at ſome time or other, and is generally more or leſs according to their knowledg and education. But Men find this ſo very troubleſom, that they are even afraid of themſelves, and avoid their own Company, and are gladly taken up in the Buſineſs or Pleaſures of this World, to keep them off from this Enemy at home.

home. And if by this means they cannot wholly ſtifle their Conſcience, but that ſtill it will be brawling and baiting at them, then the Devil helps them with another device, which is to juggle with their Conſcience, and bribe it, and bring it over to their ſide: and ſo that which God deſign'd to be their trueſt Friend, is now become their great Betrayer; it proves falſe to them, and flatters them to their ruin. Heretofore 'twas honeſt and faithful to them, and fairly warn'd them of their danger; but ſince it has been tamper'd with and corrupted, it tells them all is well and ſafe, and ſo carries them on to deſtruction. Thus do poor Wretches uſe all their art and cunning to delude and damn themſelves: ſuch may think themſelves in ſafety, but they have a very falſe and ill grounded peace, and their ſtate is very dreadful.

For conſider further: is it not a miſerable caſe to be in bondage to our Luſts; to be Slaves to Sin and Satan; to be drawn aſide by every wind of temptation? yea, have not the Sins of many brought them into continual Sorrow and Vexation? How great a Tormentor is Envy, and what a diſturber of our reſt? How uneaſy is the proud Man if he thinks himſelf diſregarded! How does the love of Mony torment the Worldling, and keep him always unquiet! So for fleſhly Luſts, what diſeaſes and aches of body

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do they bring! How uncomfortable do they render mens lives to them!

'Tis ſtrange that poor Wretches ſhould make their lives a Hell to them here, and all to fit them for a Hell hereafter.

Conſider further, that all ſuch Men have God to be their Enemy; and how dreadful muſt this be! We are apt to be afraid of a man that ſhall die, a poor Mortal, our Fellow-Creature, and to tremble under his diſpleaſure. But what is it to be under the wrath of the great God, and to have him ingaged againſt us; the mighty and terrible God, who has all power in his hands! To have his curſe upon all we do, and be every moment liable to his revenging ſtroke. Men have often found his hand very heavy on them in this world. But what is this to that Wrath to come, that is reſerved and prepared for them; *When the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; when thoſe treaſures of his Wrath ſhall be brought forth, and poured out in the greateſt meaſure?

'Twould be a diſmal thing to be baniſhed from the preſence of the ever-bleſſed God, who is the chiefeſt Good, the moſt amiable and deſirable, the fountain of all joy and happineſs; whoſe loving-kindneſs is better than life, and who will beſtow on all his Favourites

vourites much more than they are able to ask or think: To be for ever ſhut out from him muſt needs be the height of miſery.

They indeed who by their own choice have lived at ſuch a diſtance from him, and have indeavoured to keep him continually out of their thoughts, to ſuch it may not at preſent ſeem ſo uncomfortable; but the loſs is exceeding great, though through the preſent dulneſs of their minds and hardneſs of their hearts they are not ſenſible of it. However there are other puniſhments in ſtore for them, which they themſelves even now are able to judg of, and have found very terrible whenever they have lain under the laſh of them: And they are Trouble of Mind, and Pain of Body.

1. As to trouble of Mind in any ſort, how diſturbing is it to thoſe who are ſeized with it! Grief, Anger, Horror, and Deſpair, how offenſive and painful are they to the Mind! yea how great diſorder do they bring upon the whole Man! how reſtleſs and impatient under it are they, and even weary of themſelves! *A wounded Spirit who can bear!* This Men have found very grievous to them here; but how far ſhort does it come of that which all ungodly Men muſt expect in another World! that horror and amazement, that grief and anguiſh, that rage and fury, that weeping and gnaſhing of teeth! that Worm of Conſcience which will be always gnawing and tormenting

tormenting them! when God ſhall ſet theſe things home to them, and ſhew them that exceeding folly and madneſs they were guilty of! When he ſhall let them looſe upon themſelves, and make them their own cruel Tormentors! When their Minds ſhall be filled with indignation, their mouths with curſing; when they ſhall be ſtudying how to execute their malice and revenge upon themſelves! Little did they think while they were here how they were providing matter for their torment; and thoſe Sins which were committed with much greedineſs and pleaſure, are now called over, and the Sinner has them in ſuch a lively manner brought to his thoughts, that they ſerve exceedingly to rack and torture him. Something of this nature has been ſeen here, when God has come upon the Sinner in great fury, when he has ſhaken and torn him in a moſt terrible manner, fill'd him with horror and anguiſh, and driven him to the utmoſt deſpair, ſo that he has been a Hell to himſelf, and a diſmal Spectacle to the ſtanders-by.

But this comes very ſhort of what is to follow, 'tis but a taſte of Hell, and does but faintly repreſent it.

2. As to the pain of body: For ſeeing the bodies of Men were uſed to the diſhonour of God, and ſo many fleſhly Luſts committed by them, no doubt but they will be grievouſly tormented. And this Puniſhment is

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ſet forth to us by Fire. How dreadful then muſt it be to be always rolling in a fiery Furnace, ſwallowing down flames of Brimſtone, every part of our bodies in the greateſt torture! How have ſome roar'd under a fit of the Gout or Stone, or the cutting of a Limb from the Body! and we have heard of moſt dreadful tortures that poor Wretches have been put to by their Fellow-Creatures: but how far ſhort does this come of that bodily torment which Sinners muſt undergo in Hell! God may give leave to men to torture our Bodies, and kill them; but when he takes it upon him to deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell, 'twill be after another manner. We ſhall feel then the weight of his Arm, we ſhall find the dreadful effects of his Power, *He is able to deſtroy:* We ſhall know then what God can do, and ſhall find to our coſt that *he is mighty in ſtrength.* What we can conceive of this is exceeding terrible; and enough to make every joint to tremble, but alas who knows the power of his Anger? We may ſay in this reſpect, *that eye has not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the heart of Man to conceive what God has laid up for them that diſobey him.*

And that which is the ſting of all is, that theſe dreadful Puniſhments ſhall never have end. 'Twere a diſmal thing to be kept under the rack for ten thouſand years; but what is ten thouſand years to eternity? It is indeed

no

no part of it, and the longeſt ſpace of time we can imagin bears no proportion to it. Millions of thouſands, and Millions again, have nothing to do here: for when theſe are paſt, you muſt begin again, and ſo on without end. But what an afrighting thing is this, that as long as God has a being, ſo long ſhall Sinners, and ſo long have their being in torment.

How will they wiſh they had never been born! but ſince that wiſh is vain, how glad would they be to return to their firſt nothing! There was a time when they were not, O that it might be ſo again! No, God will now be watchful over them, and very careful to preſerve them: He will continually uphold and ſtrengthen them, that they may be able to ſuffer the fierceſt of his Wrath. Their Life ſhall daily be renewed, their Senſes kept quick and lively; all the Faculties of their Soul, and Members of their Body ſhall be made capable to receive the full meaſure of his Wrath. And who would not tremble at this, that a Man ſhould be kept in endleſs horror and torture! that as ſure as he is in Hell, ſo ſure he ſhall never come out; yea he ſhall certainly know that there he muſt abide to all eternity: and this will be ſuch a raking Thought as will vaſtly increaſe the torment: 'tis not eaſy to imagin what madneſs and diſtraction this will cauſe in him.

If Hell then be ſuch a diſmal place, and the torments of it ſo intolerable, how ſhould

this be a powerful Motive to us to turn ſpeedily to God, by which we ſhall eſcape it? And as this ſhould drive us to him, ſo in the next place let us caſt our thoughts upon thoſe things that may allure and draw us: and therefore,

6. For the laſt Motive, let us conſider the Privileges of thoſe who turn to God, and that certain Happineſs which will attend them: and

1. Heaven will be the portion of ſuch: They are not only redeemed from Hell, but at Death tranſlated into Heaven. 'Twould have been a great favour if they had only been delivered from the Wrath to come, which is ſo dreadful; but that God ſhould pleaſe to take ſuch to himſelf, and make them for ever happy with him, this is very amazing. How vaſtly is their condition altered for the better! from extream miſery which they were liable to, to the height of happineſs! How wide is the diſtance betwixt theſe two points! 'tis as far as the Eaſt is from the Weſt. How many are there that are roaring and howling under the quickeſt tortures? curſing themſelves, and blaſpheming God! whilſt there are others that are *in his preſence where there is fulneſs of joy, who reſt not day nor night* from his higheſt praiſes. And what makes this vaſt difference? one turned to God, and the other did not; God gives to one the juſt reward of his doings, and to the other he ſhews the abundant riches of his Mercy:

Thus

Thus ſhall it be done to the man whom God delights to honour; yea ſuch honour have all his Saints. It is their Father's good pleaſure to give them a Kingdom, and not a deceitful tottering Kingdom, (as are thoſe of this World) *but a Kingdom that cannot be moved.* Nothing is here wanting to make our Happineſs compleat and perfect: Here 'tis that God ſo fully manifeſts himſelf, and diſcovers to us the greatneſs of his Majeſty, the brightneſs of his Glory, ſo that the Soul is raviſhed and amazed, fill'd with wonder and joy: They had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but now their eye ſees him.

In this World even his beſt Servants could not bear the ſight of him, and when he had appeared to any, they counted it rather their unhappineſs than their privilege: *Wo is me, for I have ſeen the Lord of Hoſts!* they dreaded the thoughts of it, that the holy and pure God ſhould make ſo near an approach to ſuch ſinful Creatures; beſides, they were not able in that weak imperfect ſtate to abide his preſence, 'twas enough to confound and overwhlem them. But now they are pure and ſpotleſs, they are perfect and compleat, their faculties are ſtrengthened and inlarged, and they are every way fitted for this glorious ſight. And having ſuch a view of this King of Glory, how gladly are they imployed in the higheſt admirings and praiſes of him! This is their Heaven to be giving all Power, Honour and Glory to him.

Here 'tis they behold their deareſt Saviour, who *loved them, and waſhed them in his Blood*, and who receives them with the moſt tender embraces: he *went before to prepare a place for them*, and now gives them the poſſeſſion of it.

Here we meet with thoſe glorious Spirits, the holy Angels, who were always attending on us, and miniſtring unto us, and have done this their laſt office in conveying our Souls thither. And if they did ſo rejoyce at our Converſion, how glad will they be to ſee us ſafe in Heaven! No doubt but we ſhall then be honoured with their acquaintance; and though their particular favours were not diſcerned by us here, yet ſure they will then be brought to our minds, and ſome acknowledgment made perhaps to the Angels themſelves, but chiefly to God, who by their hands conveyed ſo many bleſſings to us.

Here ſhall we meet thoſe Antient Patriarchs, and other Worthies after them, who are of ſuch bleſſed Memory in the Church of God; we ſhall come to the knowledg of thoſe holy and valiant Martyrs, who being *faithful to the death, have now received their Crown of life*; who were glad to die for him who had laid down his life for them. In ſhort, we ſhall meet with all the Saints of God, *who by patient continuance in well-doing, did ſeek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality.* We ſhall be perpetually rejoycing and ſhouting with them: every one ſhall have as much as we can hold, always

always full, but never cloy'd; our Appetite continually freſh and new. And this is it which will be ſuch a heightening to our Joys, that they ſhall ever laſt: Our ſtate is fixed and immoveable: We ſhall be as Pillars in the Temple of our God, and go no more out. This is ſomewhat of that happy ſtate which ſtill vaſtly exceeds all that we can conceive: for though *glorious things are ſpoken of this City of God*, and enough to ſtir up our moſt earneſt longings, yet *the half has never yet been told us, and it doth not appear what we ſhall be.* We know not thoſe particular Services that God may there imploy us in, nor can we reach to the Glory of that Kingdom prepared for us.

2. And their gracious God does not only provide ſo richly for them in Heaven, but affords them very great and ſpecial Privileges here on Earth. For indeed as ſoon as they are heartily turned to God, their happineſs is begun, and they may then be ſaid to *enter into their Maſter's joy:* they are now in the ſame roll and liſt with thoſe who are poſſeſſed of Heaven, and *their names are written in the ſame Book of life; they are of the Family and Houſhold of God, and are Members of that Body, whereof Chriſt is the Head.* Their Converſation, or rather their Citizenſhip, is in Heaven; they are made free of that honourable Company, and do moſt ſtrictly belong to them. How highly does the Author to

the *Hebrews* expreſs this matter, *Heb.* 12. 22, 23, 24. *Ye are come unto Mount* Sion, *and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly* Jeruſalem, *and to an innumerable Company of Angels; to the general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born which are written in Heaven; and to God the Judg of all, and to the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the Blood of ſprinkling, that ſpeaketh better things than that of* Abel. What more could have been ſaid of them if they had been in Heaven? They are not indeed come to the full poſſeſſion of their Inheritance, but they are undoubted Heirs, Coheirs with Chriſt, and they have by the gracious Promiſe and Covenant of God a moſt unqueſtionable right to it. There is a time at hand when the number of his Elect ſhall be filled up; when they ſhall all be gathered together from the four Winds; and the whole Church of God ſhall be fixed in that triumphing ſtate: but in the mean time he is pleaſed to have part of his Family in Heaven, and part here on Earth; yet ſtill they are all of the ſame Family, and have all one Maſter: 'tis the ſame God, *whoſe they are, and whom they ſerve*; yea he reckons theſe below in the number of his Children, and *is not aſhamed to be called their Father: I will be a Father unto you, and ye ſhall be my Sons and Daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty.* He has a tender regard to them, and continually watches

watches over them: All his Providences are in mercy to them, and all work together for their good; *yea, he will withhold no good thing from them.* And how does he chear and comfort them in this their pilgrimage! *They have that peace of God that paſſes all underſtanding*, thoſe inward comforts and refreſhments which are better felt than expreſſed: they have *great joy in believing, yea they rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory.* God does ſometimes in an extraordinary manner diſcover himſelf to them, that they are as it were *caught into the third Heaven*, and can ſcarcely tell *whether they are in the Body, or out of the Body.* He is pleaſed to give them ſuch a ſenſe of his Love to them as does exceedingly raviſh them, and draws out ſuch pantings and thirſtings, ſuch eager deſires of Soul towards him, that they can ſcarcely think themſelves on this ſide Heaven. And this he gives them as a taſte and earneſt of their full Reward. In this reſpect indeed he is pleas'd to be more indulgent to ſome than others; he does not beſtow theſe Favours in common upon all his Children, nor upon any at all times. But the meaneſt of his Servants have ſuch a meaſure of his Grace as does incline them to love him above all things, to place their happineſs in him, and to deſire nothing in Heaven or Earth ſo much as himſelf.

And they ſo well approve of his Laws, and are ſo fully ſatisfied with their new ſtate, that they would not change it for the whole World; they are ſo fully convinced of the excellency of Religion, and the happineſs that does attend it, that nothing ſhall draw them from it. *No Tribulation or Diſtreſs, or Perſecution, or Famine, or Nakedneſs, or Peril ſhall ſeparate them from the Love of Chriſt.*

Let this therefore quicken you in your turn to God, and let it be a powerful Motive and Encouragement to true Godlineſs, ſince 'tis not only your Duty, but your higheſt Intereſt; 'tis that which is profitable to all things, having the promiſe of this life and that which is come; and though at preſent you may have no true reliſh of it, yet upon trial you will taſte its ſweetneſs, and will find to your everlaſting comfort that *God is a bountiful Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, and turn to him.* And thus much for the Motives.

And now one would hope that what has been ſet before us, might ſo far prevail as to put us upon inquiry what we ſhould do to be ſaved, and make us very ready to be inſtructed in it; which was,

III. The third thing propounded, To give you ſome Directions in this matter; and theſe ſhall be of two ſorts.

1*ſt.* Such as are more general, and ſerve to prepare you for Converſion.

2*ly.* Such as are to direct you in the Work, and in what manner you are to apply your ſelves to it.

1. Such as are more general, and ſerve to prepare us for this work; and they are theſe which follow.

(1.) Attend heedfully upon the Word. We are to be very diligent in the private reading of it: 'tis certainly much our duty to make a conſtant uſe of our Bibles: we ought diligently to *ſearch the Scriptures, for in them we know we have eternal life.* 'Tis a great affront to God, that when he has *written to us the great things of his Law,* we do not think it worth our while to read them.

We ſee how diligent the Eunuch was in reading the Word as he was travelling in his Chariot, and God made this a means of his Converſion, as you may ſee, *Acts* 8. 26, *&c.*

We are alſo carefully to attend upon the publick Miniſtry.

'Tis in this courſe that God frequently *adds to the Church ſuch as ſhall be ſaved.* This is the means which he generally uſes for the bringing in of thoſe whom he has choſen to eternal life: ſome paſſage in a Sermon touches their Hearts, and ſmites their Conſcience. Attend therefore cloſely upon it, and endeavour ſo to *hear that your Souls may live.* Go to the Word with earneſt deſires: O that God would

would now speak home to me, that this day Salvation may come to my Soul! that I may now taste some drops of that heavenly Water which will spring up to everlasting life!

(2.) Resist not the Spirit of God striving with you. God is continually calling to you by his word: *How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and the Scorners delight in their scorning, and Fools hate knowledg?* and this Call of his, as has been said, is diligently to be attended to. But by his Spirit he comes nearer, and does more closely apply himself to you. The calls of his Word are but outward, but here he comes within you; he awakens and convinces you, he mercifully strives and contends with you, he urges and beseeches you; and can you refuse and shut him out, and by this declare that he is an unwelcome Guest to you? How foolish and ungrateful is it to refuse such kind profers! How great a favour is it that God will come so near thee, and how high an affront must it be to cast him off? Well may he say to such, *My Spirit shall no longer strive with you.* How does *Stephen* upbraid the Jews with it, and reckons it as such a heinous thing, and that which shewed them to be *a stiff-necked and uncircumcised People, in that they had always resisted the Holy Ghost*, Acts 7. 51. Accept therefore thankfully of this Invitation, give ready admittance to this earnest Suitor. And when Convictions are strong upon

upon thee, when thou diſcerneſt thy ſelf moving towards God, and inclined to return to him, this thou mayſt reaſonably ſuppoſe to be the gracious Whiſpers of his Spirit: Liſten to them, and indeavour to make the beſt of them. Say, Lord doſt thou *ſtand at the door and knock? O that I may ſo hear thy Voice, as to open the door, that thou mayſt come in unto me!*

(3.) In the next place therefore be perſwaded to ſet inſtantly about it. You ſee of how great moment it is that your eternal welfare depends upon it, and you cannot but acknowledg that things of the higheſt concernment ought to have your firſt and chief care: And don't fancy to your ſelf that any other time will be more convenient, but be aſſured that the longer you ſtay, the harder 'twill be; and by delay you do but make work for much more trouble and ſorrow.

(4.) Adviſe with ſome Miniſter or other Friend, whom you may depend upon for their skill and faithfulneſs. This means you will find very helpful to you: for though Books may be very uſeful, and you may find much benefit by peruſing them, yet there may be ſomething in every ones particular Caſe, which they cannot reach, and you will be much at a loſs if you have not ſome body at hand to guide you as the matter may require. And be not aſhamed to diſcover your ſelf fully to him, but do it with the greateſt openneſs and freedom. There is ſhame in Sin, but

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no ſhame in acknowledgment of it: if you tell him your Caſe by halves, his Counſel may be very improper and hurtful to you inſtead of doing good; and when you have given him a true and naked account how matters ſtand, be ruled by him and follow his directions: be not like thoſe that go to the Phyſician for their Health, and take their own courſe.

(5.) Conſider beforehand what it will coſt to be religious. Reckon upon it that you muſt meet with many hardſhips, and troubles, and croſſes. You may poſſibly be forſaken by your deareſt Friends, you may be reproached and ſcorned by them; nay, you may be called to ſuffer very hardly for your Religion, and to part with Life it ſelf on this account: but this you muſt ſurely expect that a religious life is not a life of eaſe and ſloth, and indulging of your ſelf, but that there is much labour and ſelf-denial which always attends it. That you muſt *cut off your right hand, and pluck out your right eye if it offends you:* that is, you muſt part with every darling luſt, though it ſtick never ſo cloſe, and be never ſo ſutable to you, and ſeem almoſt neceſſary to your temper and conſtitution. In a word, you are likely to find troubles from within and without: you may meet with ſevere ſufferings from others, but be ſure you muſt always be fighting and contending with your ſelf.

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And if you do not at firſt make an allowance for this, you will find your ſelf diſappointed, and diſcouraged; and when Perſecution or any other Difficulties come in your way, you will preſently yield and turn back. Provide therefore for this, and arm your ſelf againſt it. And in the next place,

(*6.*) Conſider what incouragement you have to be religious notwithſtanding all theſe difficulties. For though your work be hard, and of your ſelf you can do nothing, yet through God's Bleſſing and Aſſiſtance, which you have reaſon to expect, you will be able to do all things; he has promiſed to his own that he will never leave them nor forſake them: beſides, how much pleaſure is there even in denying your ſelves, in warring againſt your Luſts, and beating down the ſtrong Holds of Satan! though there be much labour and toil in it, yet there is alſo ſo much delight and ſatisfaction as will make abundant amends for it. And what though you be ſcorned and deſpiſed by others, yet if God approves and commends you, this muſt needs be a great chearing. The Apoſtles ſeem'd to think it a Privilege to lie under the diſgrace of wicked Men, and rejoiced that they were thought worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name; yea, though they perſecute you in the ſevereſt manner. Our Saviour tells us that even ſuch are bleſſed, and bids them *rejoice and be exceeding glad,* and

and good reaſon for it, *for great is their reward in Heaven:* ſo that this is it which recommends Religion to the World, and ſhews the excellency of it, that there is ſo much eaſe and pleaſure in the moſt harſh and rugged parts of it. That it gives ſuch comfort and refreſhing to us in the midſt of all our labours, ſuch peace and joy in all our troubles and diſtreſſes: *As ſorrowing, yet always rejoycing.* And though all do not attain to this in ſo full a meaſure, yea ſome are ſo loaded with doubts and fears, that they loſe the comfort of Religion: yet this is through their own weakneſs, and for want of a true underſtanding of their Caſe; and when once they come to be ſet right in this matter, and diſcover their own ſincerity, they will ſoon find that comfort in Religion which belongs to it.

(7.) Forſake all evil Company. Nothing tends more to harden men in a ſinful courſe, or is a greater hindrance to their Repentance than ill company. Shun them therefore as thou wouldſt do the Devil, whoſe Inſtruments they are, and who makes uſe of them to keep thee from God, and to make ſure thy Damnation. Reſolve within thy ſelf that thou wilt never more have to do with them; tell them once for all, that you are ſenſible how much you have been in the wrong, that you are now reſolved by the grace of God to change your courſe, and if they

they will turn with you, you ſhall be glad of their Company; and ſhould rejoice to think that you who have been *Brethren in iniquity, ſhould take ſweet Counſel together*, and be Companions in God's Service: But if they think fit to go on in their old courſe, and refuſe to be reformed, you are reſolved to leave them; for if one of theſe muſt be, you had rather go to Heaven without them than to Hell with them.

And who knows but that ſuch a mighty and ſudden Change in thee his Fellow-ſinner, may much amaze and ſtartle him, and ſuch a friendly Warning from thee may by the bleſſing of God be made ſucceſsful to turn his heart; and then you have gain'd a great point; for *by turning him from the error of his way, you will ſave a Soul from death, and hide a multitude of Sins.* But if you ſhould not be ſo happy to reclaim him, yet this advantage will come to your ſelf by it, that you are never likely to have any further trouble from him: for when he ſees you ſo reſolved, and ſo obſtinately bent to a religious courſe, he will be as careful to avoid you as you are deſirous of it: for as *the filthy Converſation of the Wicked vexes the righteous Souls* of good Men; ſo the ſtrict and holy life of godly ones is a melancholy ſight for wicked Men to behold: it daily reproaches and upbraids them, it wounds and ſtings them to the very heart; and eſpecially when they find that their

their old Companions in Sin have now turn'd their courſe, and are ſo zealous for God. They are glad to keep ſuch out of their ſight and thoughts.

And therefore by the way, one word to theſe alſo. Are you ſuch who ſtand in awe of your Godly Friends or Neighbours, who by their upright and ſteddy walking, do juſtly condemn and vex you? Be adviſed to caſt in thy lot among them; liſt thy ſelf into their Society, let their God be thy God, and be followers of them as they are of Chriſt; and then thoſe whom you look'd upon as your daily Perſecutors, you will now reckon as your deareſt Friends and greateſt Comforters. The examples of ſuch before you have been as Scourges in your ſides, and thorns in your eyes, but now they will be as Goads and Spurs to you to quicken and ſtir you up to your duty. There may be ſome ſtrife betwixt you, but 'twill be which ſhall do moſt ſervice to your common Lord. Some Provokings there will be, but 'twill be *to love and to good works. Agree therefore quickly with this thine Adverſary, and make a friend of him, thou wilt ſoon find the benefit and comfort of it.*

(8.) Let not the greatneſs and number of your Sins diſcourage you. God hath invited the greateſt Sinners to come in, and aſſured them of Mercy and Pardon. *Iſa.* 55. 9. *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man*

man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy on him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. He will abundantly pardon: this ſhews that Sins may be ſo exceeding great and heinous, and of ſuch a vaſt number, that they may need abundance of pardon; but let them have been as great as they will, and for number as the ſand of the Sea, yet ſuch an abundant, ſuch a full pardon they ſhall have, as that the Sinner ſhall be wholly acquitted, if he forſake his way and his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord: and the reaſon is given, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways, ſaith the Lord.* It ſeems ſtrange to us that God ſhould forgive Sins: For if thoſe who are placed under us ſhould abuſe and ſcorn us, and be continually offending and provoking us, we could hardly bear with them, and find it exceeding difficult to forgive them, though they are but our Fellow-Creatures: But that the great God ſhould forgive ſuch high and daily affronts put upon him by ſuch vile Worms as we are; this is it we cannot well conceive, and are backward to believe: But why? becauſe we fooliſhly meaſure God by our ſelves, and are apt to think his thoughts to be our thoughts, not conſidering the vaſt reach of his Mercy, the height of his Compaſſion, and the abundance of his Goodneſs, which is without bounds.

Further conſider, that Chriſt ſhed his Blood for the greateſt Sinners; and we may be well aſſured, that the exceeding precious blood of the Son of God, yea who was God himſelf, that this Blood ſhed upon the Croſs was of ſufficient value to procure pardon for the greateſt Sinner; yea we are expreſly told that *God ſent his Son into the World, that whoſoever believes in him ſhould have eternal life.* So that the greateſt Sinner has as much incouragement to come in, and as good ground to hope for Mercy as any. Not that this readineſs of God to pardon ſhould any ways leſſen our thoughts of Sin: but if any have been ſuch notorious offenders and graceleſs Rebels, their ſorrow, and ſhame, and humiliation ſhould be in ſome meaſure ſutable to the greatneſs of their crimes. Indeed a ſinner of the loweſt degree can never be ſufficiently humbled, but ſuch as theſe eſpecially ought to *lie down in their ſhame, and be covered with their Confuſion.* God expects from them a more than ordinary brokenneſs and contrition of heart, and abhorrence of themſelves, but yet with an humble truſting in his Mercy for the pardon of their greateſt offences for his Son's ſake.

As for the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt which the Scripture ſaith ſhall never be forgiven, you have great reaſon to hope you were never guilty of it: for it ſeems plain enough, that that Sin conſiſted in believing that the Miracles

Miracles which Chriſt wrought were done by the power of the Devil, as you may read in that account given of it, *Mark* 3. 22, &c. And 'tis very unlikely that ſuch a thought ſhould enter into the heart of any one in theſe days. How great a Sinner therefore ſoever you may be in other reſpects, yet herein you may comfort your ſelf, that you have not committed this Sin, and that therefore pardon is ſtill offered to you upon repentance. Beſides, whatever that Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt may be, thoſe who have committed it are given up to hardneſs of heart, and ſhut out from a poſſibility of returning; but if you find your ſelf in a repenting frame, turning to God and cloſing with Chriſt; by this you may be ſure that you are free from this unpardonable Sin, and in a fair way to Salvation.

9. Carry on this work throughout. Whatever difficulties you may meet with, be not daunted, but ſtill hold on. 'Tis by Converſion you enter into Heaven, and this requires your moſt earneſt ſtriving: Leave not the work half done: *Look to your ſelf that you loſe not the things you have wrought, but that you receive a full reward.*

This Work may have, eſpecially at firſt, ſome great difficulties attending it; but if ever thou wouldſt get to Heaven, thou muſt go this way. Do not therefore flag and faint, but ſtrengthen thy reſolution and cou-

rage, and bring the work to ſome good iſſue, how painful and irkſom ſoever it may be.

If thou ſhouldſt come ſhort, what a diſmal reflection would it be to thee in the other World, that thou wert not far from the Kingdom of God, but cameſt ſhort of it; that thou wert almoſt, but not altogether a Chriſtian! that a little more labour and ſtriving, a little more vigour and reſolution might have made thee happy! Thou wert once at the borders of Heaven, but now thou art at the bottom of Hell: Thou didſt begin, and madeſt ſome progreſs in the Work, but didſt grow weary, and fainted ſt; or it may be the ſcorns and reproaches thou didſt meet with did turn thee back, and thou wert even ſhamed out of thy Salvation. Or thou trembledſt at perſecution, and didſt fear him that could but kill the Body, more than him that could deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell, as thou now findeſt to thy greateſt ſorrow. Take care therefore leſt this be thy miſerable complaint when there will be no recovery. Speedily begin, and with full purpoſe endeavour to carry on this Work in the ſeveral parts of it; begging that he who hath begun a good work in thee would carry it on to the day of Chriſt. And this brings to the

2*d* Sort of Directions, which was to direct you in the Work it ſelf, and in what manner you may apply your ſelf to it, and they are theſe which follow.

1. The

1. The firſt thing in order to this great Work is Conſideration. You muſt ſeriouſly debate the matter with your ſelves: 'tis for want of this that ſo many run headlong to deſtruction: How can you ever come to a true underſtanding of your caſe, if you conſider not what it is? You will never be prevailed upon to leave your courſe, till you conſider the folly and miſery of it: 'Tis complain'd that no man repented, and the reaſon is, becauſe no man conſidered, no Man ſaid, what have I done? And here ſome will be glad to excuſe themſelves from this neceſſary duty by pleading that they are altogether unfit and unable for it, that they are of low parts, and weak heads, and have little skill in theſe matters: that they are not able to put things together, to compare them, and make a right judgment of them. But this is deceive your ſelves, and but a Plea for your lazyneſs: for though you may not have ſuch largeneſs of underſtanding, nor ſuch quickneſs of parts as many others, and are not able ſo ſtrongly to argue the caſe, yet has not God made you a reaſonable Creature, and given you the power of thinking? Is there nothing that you can do in this matter? Can you not ſay thus to your ſelf, What a miſerable condition has Sin brought me into, and how woful is my ſtate if I continue in it! I have highly offended the great God, and laid my ſelf open to his vengeance:

however my caſe is not deſperate, but there are ſtill hopes for me if I turn to him. One would think 'twere very poſſible for the weakeſt to uſe thus much of thought. Conſider a little how much you can do of this, when the matters of this World call you to it: Suppoſe therefore that you are a poor Man, who have very much diſpleaſed one of your rich Neighbours, from whom you had your livelihood, and have ſo far provoked him, that he has wholly caſt you off, by which you are brought into a very needy and helpleſs condition: Now in theſe Circumſtances you do not run away, and ſo ſtarve your ſelf and Family, but you preſently call the thing over, and conſider how fooliſhly you have acted, what danger you are in of bringing ruin to your ſelf, and all that belong to you, unleſs ſome ſpeedy courſe be taken. What therefore is now to be done? Why this you eaſily reſolve upon as the likelieſt way to help you: That you will go directly to this Perſon whom you have thus offended, you will own your fault, and acknowledg how unworthily you have dealt with him who had been ſo kind a Friend to you: you will earneſtly beg his pardon, and aſſure him that it ſhall be your daily endeavour to ſerve him to the utmoſt of your power.

Now here is much debate and conſideration, this matter has been duly thought of and weighed by you; and yet is not this a

thing very eaſy to be done, and do you not often thus exerciſe your thoughts in the ſeveral Affairs of your life? and can you not as well do it in the buſineſs of your Souls? Does your Reaſon ſerve only to contrive for the things of this world? Are you not capable to meditate of things that concern your Souls as well as your Bodies? of things that relate to a future State, as well as to this preſent life? It muſt be confeſſed that there is in us a great unwillingneſs and backwardneſs to things of this nature, and they are not ſo eaſy and ready for our thoughts to fix upon: but he that refuſes duty becauſe 'tis difficult, will never come to Heaven. 'Tis alſo true; that 'tis not in our power to bring our minds to a ſpiritual, ſaving ſenſe of theſe things; but let us ſtir up our ſelves, and do our beſt, and we have the greateſt incouragement to expect further help: and therefore,

2. Pray earneſtly to God that he would aſſiſt you in this matter. Come to him with a ſenſe of your utter inability to turn your ſelf, and beg that he would guide and direct you in the whole. But here again ſome would be excuſed, and complain that they are ſuch utter ſtrangers to any thing of Prayer, at leaſt in private, that they knew not how to go about it, that they never uſed the Name of God unleſs it were to take it in vain, or ever put up any petition to him, unleſs it were that when they had profaned

his Name, they cried (in courſe) *God forgive me*; that this is all the Devotion they have been acquainted with: They know not how to preſent themſelves to God, and want words to expreſs their minds. But are ſuch convinced that they are in a miſerable State? and that in this dangerous caſe their help is from God alone? ſurely then this will ſend you directly to him, and furniſh you with Words and Arguments to plead with him. Does the Beggar want words to make known his caſe? in what a doleful affecting manner can he ſet it forth! and how earneſtly can he plead for charity and relief! He is ſo pinched with hunger and nakedneſs, and want of all things, that it provokes him to ſpeak, and affords him words to explain himſelf. So if you are ſenſible that you are miſerable, and wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked, you will go to him who alone can relieve and ſuccour you, and you will (at leaſt in ſome meaſure) be able to order your cauſe before him. Neither is this ſo difficult as it ſeems to him that never tried it. For, is it a thing difficult to confeſs your Sins to God in their particulars, which you have found your ſelves to have been guilty of? And cannot you beg of God to give you a due ſenſe of them, and make you to ſee what a vile Wretch you have been? Further, cannot you pray to him that out of his great Mercy in Chriſt Jeſus he would free-

ly forgive all your Sins, though ſo many and ſo great? and laſtly, cannot you beg that he would give you grace to turn unfeignedly to him from all your Sins, to become a new Creature, and lead a new life? And whoever in earneſt ſets himſelf about it, will not find it ſo difficult to addreſs himſelf to God in this or the like manner. God doth not expect from thoſe of mean abilities, that their Prayers ſhould be directed to him with ſuch exactneſs of words: For though we are to preſent our ſelves to him with all poſſible awe and reverence, and ſerve him in the beſt manner we can, yet when a mournful returning Sinner comes humbly to the throne of Grace, and as he is able expreſſes his deſires to God, no doubt but he may be accepted though his Prayer be put up in ſomewhat a broken manner.

3. Look back into thy life, and take as particular an account of it as poſſibly thou canſt. Go as far backward as thou canſt remember, and call to mind thy moſt early Sins. Begin at thy Childhood, and carry it on through the ſeveral places and ſtages of thy life even to thy preſent time. Conſider how thou wert when thou firſt knew good and evil, how thou didſt afterwards behave thy ſelf in thy riper years, how when thou livedſt in ſuch a place, and how when thou wert in ſuch a condition. In examining thy ſelf thus by parts, thou wilt more eaſily call to mind

mind thoſe ſeveral Sins which in the different Circumſtances of thy life thou haſt been guilty of. And for thy further help, 'twill not be amiſs to make uſe of ſome Treatiſe wherein the ten Commandments are explain'd, and call thy ſelf to an account how thou haſt behaved thy ſelf in reſpect to every Command. Wherein thou wilt diſcover thoſe Sins, which were more directly committed againſt God himſelf, and thoſe againſt thy Neighbour.

And this you muſt conſider, that not only the outward groſs acts of Sin are forbidden, but even all appearance of evil; yea all evil deſires, and every filthy thought, all unprofitable expence of thy time, all exceſſive love of the World, every idle word, and the like. So that beſides thoſe Sins which are open to the view of men, thou wilt find thy ſelf to have been guilty of vaſt multitudes, which perhaps thou hitherto thoughtſt to be none, or at leaſt not worth the taking notice of. Yea thou wilt find that thy whole Life has been little elſe but Sin; for thou haſt never had any true fear of God before thine eyes, thou never performedſt any action in a right manner to him, and throughout thy courſe thou haſt gone aſtray. However let not this ſcare thee, but ſearch diligently, and as near as thou canſt let no Sin eſcape thee. For though indeed after all thy care, there will abundance lie hid from thee (for *who*

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can tell how oft he offends? we muſt beg of God to *cleanſe us from theſe ſecret faults)* yet if any Sin through thy ſloth and negligence remain undiſcovered, thou art not ſafe.

4. When thou haſt brought thy Sins to mind, then endeavour to work in thy ſelf ſome ſutable thoughts concerning them, and ſuch as may ſtir thee up to a Godly ſorrow. Conſider what a vile Wretch thou haſt been. O the numberleſs number of Sins! For a Man to break the Law of God, though but in one ſingle act, how horrid is it! it lays a Man under ſuch great guilt as 'tis impoſſible we ſhould expreſs it. For we cannot tell how foul and abominable a thing Sin is, unleſs we had a full Diſcovery of the infinite Majeſty of God againſt whom it is committed. We can only ſay that Sin is the moſt daring thing that ever was attempted, that the guilt of it is prodigiouſly, unſpeakably great, and infinitely above what we can conceive. And if it be thus in reſpect of every ſingle Sin, then how art thou above all meaſure guilty, what heaps of wrath and vengeance haſt thou treaſured up to thy ſelf againſt the day of Wrath, if God be not merciful to thee, who haſt in ſo many ways diſhonoured and affronted thy great Maker! Thou haſt plainly ſhewed thy contempt of his authority by a ſtrange variety of Sins, and ſuch a conſtant unwearied repeating of the ſame; yea by this thou haſt renounced his Government,

Government, and declared thou wilt not have him to rule over thee. But doſt thou conſider what thou haſt done in all this? when he from whom thou haſt thy life, and all the comforts of it, may juſtly expect from thee all fear and reverence, the higheſt reſpect and honour; that this great and mighty Soveraign ſhould be kicked at, and ſet at nought by thee! That thy whole life ſhould be a continual ſcorning and deſpiſing of him, *whom all the Angels ſo highly worſhip*, who cover their faces, not daring to look directly on him, who caſt down their Crowns before him, in token of the higheſt reverence and ſubmiſſion: And this is he whom thou haſt made ſo bold with.

Further conſider, 'tis by his goodneſs and bounty thou haſt lived all this while, 'tis he that has made a conſtant proviſion for thee, 'tis by his ſtrength that thou haſt hitherto been ſupported: nay 'tis owing to his diſtinguiſhing Mercy and Goodneſs, that thou art all this while kept out of Hell, when others of thy Companions, who poſſibly were much better than thy ſelf, are gone into that bottomleſs Pit. And is this the thanks thou haſt given him? Is this the requital thou haſt made to him, to live in conſtant rebellion againſt him, and do the greateſt deſpite to him?

Conſider yet that thou haſt ſin'd againſt thine own knowledg; for thou haſt been told over

over and over again from the Book of God, that ſuch things ought not to be done, that Sin is that which is highly diſpleaſing to him, and the abominable thing which he hates. Thou haſt had frequent warning of it from thy Miniſter, it may be both in publick and private, and from others of thy Friends that wiſhed thee well, but thou haſt hardned thy neck againſt reproof. Nay Conſcience, thy Boſom-friend, has often checked thee, and has ſeverely rebuked and laſhed thee; it has according to its Office ſtepped in between thee and thy Sin, to withhold thee from it, but could not keep thee off: yea God himſelf by his various Providences has called upon thee, and ſtretched out his hand to thee, and by his Spirit has ſtriven with thee, and all to no purpoſe: ſo hardned, ſo ſtiff-necked haſt thou been, and ſo obſtinately bent on Sin, that nothing could turn thee back.

Now after all this, what thinkeſt thou of thy ſelf, whoſe whole life has been a conſtant Diſobedience and Rebellion, and thy Sins committed in ſuch a notorious and provoking manner, as has exceedingly heightened thy guilt; ſo that here is guilt upon guilt, and that in a very high degree. Art thou not then amazed at thy ſelf, that ever there ſhould be ſuch a Monſter in nature, ſuch a bold and profane Rebel, ſuch a vile ungrateful Wretch, ſuch a ſenſleſs Fool, ſuch a brute Beaſt? and when all is ſaid, it comes far ſhort

of

of ſetting thee forth according to thy deſert. And this may be ſaid, not only of the openly profane and leud ones, who have run to all exceſs of riot; but even the beſt of thoſe who have lived in an unregenerate State, and without the true fear of God, will own their exceeding great guilt, when once God brings them to ſee things as they are; yea every one with *Agur* will be apt to ſay of himſelf, *Surely I am more brutiſh than any man*, and will find abundant matter for the deepeſt ſorrow and abaſement.

5. Confeſs thy Sins before God in the moſt ſolemn and particular manner: yea, let every one thou canſt call to mind be ſingly acknowledged to him; for though he knows them all, and thouſands more than thou canſt think of, yet 'tis very fit thou ſhouldeſt make the moſt large and particular Confeſſion thou canſt, and after all beg his forgiveneſs of thoſe innumerable Sins forgotten by thee, but yet are all in his Book; pray earneſtly they may be blotted out.

Withal, thou art to acknowledg thoſe very bad circumſtances with which they have been committed, and what thou haſt done to make them ſo exceeding ſinful. This alſo ought to be done very particularly and expreſly, that we may own as fully as we can how grievouſly we have offended. And when thou haſt done this, endeavour to ſtir up thy ſelf, and make thy earneſt Supplications

cations to God: *Lord, I am ſenſible how unable I am to affect my own heart; O that thou wouldeſt more fully diſcover me to my ſelf, and throughly convince me of the exceeding foulneſs of my Sins: ſoften my hard heart, and make it pliant and relenting: Humble me, and fill me with abaſement. Inkindle in me thoſe holy paſſions of Anger, Revenge and Indignation againſt my ſelf, that ſhame and ſorrow which my Caſe juſtly calls for. Bring me even to the brink of Hell, if thou ſeeſt it neceſſary for the carrying on the purpoſes of thy Grace in me. Work in me whatever may be a means to* bring me out of darkneſs into thy marvellous light, *and to turn me wholly and fully to thy ſelf.*

6. Reſt upon the Merits of Chriſt alone for the pardon of your Sins. Think not that any of your ſorrows and tears, your judging and condemning your ſelf, your Prayers and Wreſtlings with God, think not that theſe have the leaſt ſhare in procuring your acceptance with him. There are ſcarcely any who will directly own that we deſerve any thing of God by what we do, but there is ſomething in moſt Men that looks too like it. Men are apt to put too great a value upon their Duties, and to have too good an opinion of them, and would fain hope that God is pleaſed with them as theirs.

The beſt of men have complain'd of their ſtrong inclinations this way: But let it be our daily care to caſt out all thoughts of this nature.

nature. For ſuppoſe we could do in the moſt full and perfect manner what God requires of us, do we think to merit of him by it? no ſurely, for we do no more than what we are bound to, and our Saviour has plainly reſolved that caſe, telling us that he that does no more than his Duty deſerves nothing, *Luke* 17. 10. *So likewiſe ye when ye have done all thoſe things which are commanded you, ſay we are unprofitable Servants, we have done that which was our Duty to do.*

But when we conſider how very ſhort we come in theſe Duties, how weak and imperfect they are, and how much of Sin there is in the very beſt of them, and therefore how very unworthy they are of that God to whom we perform them, this were enough to take down our pride, and turn it into ſhame, when we conſider that our beſt Services in themſelves are ſo far from being pleaſing to God, that they may juſtly be very odious and abominable to him. And we were in a miſerable ſtate if we were left here. But thanks be to God we have a merciful and faithful High Prieſt in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for our Sins, to procure acceptance of our Duties, and to preſent us faultleſs before him. Let us therefore turn unfeignedly unto God, relying wholly upon the Merits of our Saviour, ſeeing 'tis through him alone that our Sins are pardoned, our Perſons accepted and received into

into God's favour. And through him we may have acceſs to the Father, and come boldly to the throne of Grace to obtain mercy. Nothing can be more pleaſing to God than that we renounce our ſelves wholly, that we come before him as poor, and weak, and empty; as ſuch who have nothing to recommend us to his favour, but much the contrary. But 'tis in his Son's Name we apply our ſelves to him, his beloved Son in whom he is well pleaſed; 'tis in and through him alone we expect all mercy and favour from him; 'tis for his ſake we beg that he would be reconciled to us, receive us graciouſly, and love us freely. And when we come thus, if we are otherwiſe rightly qualified, we ſhall receive all as fully and freely from him, as if we had procured it by our own deſerts: and though we are ſtill Sinners, and very unworthy in our ſelves, yet God has a tender regard to us, and we are very dear to him for his Son's ſake. 'Tis therefore through him alone that God looks upon us, and not for any thing in our poor ſelves. Not but that good Works are as eagerly to be purſued, as if we could purchaſe the higheſt place in Heaven by them; we are under the moſt powerful engagements to them, and without them none ſhall ſee the Lord. Yea, they are to be performed by us with much delight and pleaſure; nay, we may with great contentment and comfort reflect upon it, that we

have ſerved God in faithfulneſs and ſincerity, and 'tis very lawful as well as pleaſant to feaſt upon a good Conſcience. But this we ſhould be fearful of, leſt any proud thought of our ſelves creep in, and we attribute any thing to our own doings, as if there were the leaſt virtue or worth in them. Give God and Chriſt the full and intire Glory of them, and then *be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, always abounding in them.*

7. Come to a full reſolution. The caſe before you is, whether you will ſerve God, or the Devil, and your Luſts; whether you will chooſe Bondage or Freedom; whether you will be a Saint, or a Brute; and whether you will go to Heaven or Hell. And one would think 'twere very eaſy to determine this matter. Reſolve then, ſeeing you have ſo good grounds for it, that *whatever others do, you will ſerve the Lord.* Cleave to him with a moſt full purpoſe of heart: let there not be the leaſt wavering or uncertainty in your minds; endeavour to keep up in your ſelf a moſt ſtrong and powerful bent of Soul. And let this reſolution be immediately put in practice, ſet upon the mortification of every Luſt with the greateſt vigour; ſpare neither great nor ſmall, but aim chiefly at your beloved Luſt, have that always in your eye; and that which has been ſo dear to you, and ſo much cheriſhed, now ſet your ſelf againſt it with the greateſt violence; mark

mark the riſings and ſtirrings of it, and keep it always under. And let Grace be the moſt deſirable thing in your eye: let it appear that you do hunger and thirſt after it, by earneſt endeavours to obtain it. Carefully uſe all the means that God has appointed for this end; and let hearing, reading, meditating, watching, and praying, be in conſtant uſe: thus ſhew that you are in good earneſt, and moſt fully reſolved.

8. Enter into a ſolemn Covenant with God: 'Tis not enough to reſolve within your ſelf, but 'tis your duty to treat with God in this caſe, and to give him the moſt full aſſurance that you will be his for ever. And this we find practiſed in Scripture, *Neh.9. ult.* The Jews after a ſolemn confeſſion of their Sins, becauſe of all this, ſay they, we make a ſure Covenant, and write it; and our Princes, Levites and Prieſts ſeal to it. And we often find *David* vowing to God. This indeed ought frequently in our lives to be done, and there are ſundry occaſions for it. But it ſeems to be very ſeaſonable and proper at this time, now we are brought to a ſenſe of our Duty, and of our ſtrong engagements to God, and therefore 'tis fit we ſhould tie our ſelves to him in the ſtricteſt bonds. We are now to declare to him, that we offer up our Souls and Bodies a living Sacrifice unto him through Chriſt: We tell him that we are ſenſible how much we are already

ingaged to his Service, that he has the trueſt right to demand it from us in the higheſt degree; but yet we are deſirous to reſign up our ſelves to him by a free Promiſe, and a moſt ſolemn Vow. We in a very reverend and awful manner ſwear to him, that it ſhall be the conſtant ſtudy and indeavour of our lives to pleaſe him, that his Laws ſhall be our daily rule, and our whole courſe ſhall be directed by them: though other Lords have had dominion over us, yet now we take him alone to govern us, to guide us, and to ſave us. And this ſhould be done in a ſenſe of our own weakneſs and frailty: that though the vows of God are upon us, and we have been ſo full of our promiſes to him; yet we are not in the leaſt able to perform them by our own ſtrength. We have not power to grapple with Temptations, but ſhall eaſily be born down and overcome, if left to our ſelves, as we have often found by ſad experience. We therefore commit our ſelves to him in well-doing, we humbly depend upon him for daily ſtrength and freſh ſupplies. And we beg that ſince he has inclined us to offer up our ſelves to him, we may by the ſame good hand of our God upon us, be inabled to pay our Vows. Yea we have very ſtrong and comfortable hopes, that he will never leave nor forſake us: We firmly truſt that our whole Spirit, Soul, and Body, ſhall be preſerved blameleſs unto the coming of

of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſince he is faithful that has called us, who alſo will do it.

After this you ought frequently to renew your Covenant, and take all opportunities for it. 'Tis not only reaſonable, but a very delightful thing to reſign up our ſelves to him, to acknowledg his undoubted right to us, and to give him the full poſſeſſion of us; to ſtand to and frequently confirm this choice; to own that we are ſo far from the leaſt thought of drawing back, that it is our greateſt pleaſure to bind our ſelves ſtill ſtronger, and to be daily adding to our ingagements. And by this time we ſhall ſee how much it is our Duty to attend upon our Lord at his Supper, which is ſuch a confirming and ſtrengthning Ordinance, and where this Covenant-work is in ſuch a lively manner carried on: Where Chriſt on his part makes over to us the full benefit of his Body and Blood, and in the moſt indearing manner aſſures us of Pardon, Grace, and Glory; and we on our parts embrace theſe gracious offers with the higheſt thankfulneſs, and preſent our ſelves afreſh to him, begging him to accept of our ſtrongeſt reſolutions to be his.

9. And when you are by the ſpecial favour of God brought into this condition, let it be your endeavour to ſhew forth the praiſes of him who has called you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light, and to walk as thoſe that have not received the Grace of God in

vain. Consider that you are now brought under new Circumstances, and that every Sin you commit is in many respects greatly heightened. You are now come to see the great evil of Sin, and how abominable and filthy a thing it is, and will you thus condemn your self by yielding to it? God has now spoken Peace to your Souls, and given you a taste of the greatest Love that ever was heard of, yea much greater than can enter into the heart of Man to conceive; and will you requite him in this manner? Yea, he has not only ingaged you, but you have bound your selves to him by the most solemn and deliberate Vows; and is it a light matter to be forsworn to him? Besides, the Honour of God and the Credit of Religion is herein concerned; you are to adorn your Profession by a most steddy and upright walking, that so you may render Religion a lovely thing in the eyes of others, and that they seeing your good Works, may glorify your heavenly Father. But if on the contrary you prove unfaithful to your God, and by turning back seem weary of his Service, you bring the greatest disgrace and reproach upon Religion, and cause it to be evil spoken of, and the Name of God to be blasphemed; and so you have a heap of other mens Sins to be added to your own.

Since therefore you are on all accounts under such strong engagements, endeavour to

keep up to them. And do not think your ſelves in ſuch a fixed ſtate, as that you are wholly out of danger; dare not to try how far 'tis poſſible for a renewed man to go back: let it appear by the holineſs and fruitfulneſs of your lives, that you are of thoſe who are created of Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which he hath before ordained that you ſhould walk in them. Let watching and praying be the conſtant buſineſs of your lives; for how can we expect aſſiſtance from God to do his will, unleſs we beg it of him? and how little good will come to us by our Prayers, if we are careleſs, and neglect our Watch? Beſtir your ſelves therefore, and be not weary in well-doing; for you ſhall reap abundantly, if you faint not.

In this World you may meet with tribulation; but be of good Comfort, Chriſt has overcome the World, ſo that nothing in it ſhall really hurt you: and in a little time you ſhall be removed from it, and be fully freed from all the Labour, and Sorrow, and Sin of it, and be tranſlated into a place of eternal reſt and joy.

FINIS.

AN

ABSTRACT

Of the foregoing Diſcourſe concerning Converſion.

IN treating of this Subject I ſhall,

Firſt, Shew the nature of Converſion.
Secondly, Give ſome Motives and Arguments for it: And
Thirdly, Some Directions about it.

Firſt, Shew the nature of Converſion. Converſion ſignifies a turning from one thing to another: in this therefore we are turned from a ſtate of Nature to a ſtate of Grace. A ſtate of Nature is that ſtate wherein we were all born, which is a ſtate of Sin and Enmity to God, which was conveyed to us by *Adam*'s Fall: for as he by his eating the forbidden fruit, fell from that holy ſtate in which God had made him, and ſo became an impure

impure ſinful Creature; ſo we which came from him muſt needs partake of the ſame nature, for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? and our daily practice ſhews how ſinful our Natures are, we plainly declare it by our daily actual tranſgreſſions of the Laws of God; yea whilſt we are in this ſtate, there is no true fear of God before our Eyes, and our lives muſt needs be a continual offence to him. But in Converſion there is by the grace of God a mighty change wrought in us, which runs through the whole Man, through all the Powers of the Soul and Members of the Body.

1*ſt*. This Change is ſeen in all the Powers of the Soul, which are the Underſtanding, Will, and Affections.

1. In the Underſtanding. A man in the ſtate of Nature perceiveth not the things of God: and in this dark ſtate we continue, till by the Grace of God the eyes of our Underſtandings are inlightned, and then we have quite other thoughts of things than what we formerly had: We formerly delighted in Sin, but now we ſee the filthineſs of it, and hate it; we perceive how very unreaſonable and fooliſh a thing it is. We have alſo right thoughts of Holineſs; heretofore we thought meanly of it, but now we admire it; we ſee it to be a very lovely thing: 'tis that which is ſo excellent in it ſelf, and ſo much to our advan-

advantage, that which ſets us right in all reſpects, which makes us happy here and hereafter. Our thoughts alſo about Chriſt are much changed: Heretofore we ſaw no beauty in him; but now he is exceeding precious to us. We wonder mightily at his Love in taking our Nature upon him, and that he who was without Sin, ſhould lay down his life for us Sinners, and who were his Enemies.

2. There is a change alſo in the Will. Heretofore we were ſtrongly bent upon Sin, and freely conſented to it: but now we refuſe it, and though ſometimes we are brought over to it by ſtrong temptations, yet this is againſt the chief purpoſe and bent of our minds. And thus 'tis with us alſo as to Holineſs: though heretofore we were ſet againſt it, yet we now conſent to it, and chooſe it above all things.

3. There is a change in the Affections. Heretofore his Affections were ſet on this World, and he thought there was no other Happineſs than what is to be found here: if it went well with him in worldly matters, this did mightily rejoice him; but if otherwiſe, then was he filled with ſorrow: his Paſſions were raiſed by the things of this World, for his whole heart was ſet upon it: But in Converſion the Caſe is otherwiſe; he now ſees the vanity and emptineſs of earthly things, and therefore is little affected with them.

them. The World is not ſo tempting to him in all its bravery: indeed he may be ſometime too much concerned about it; but this he is ſenſible of, and groans under it, and ſtill his prevailing love is for God, and the things of another World do moſt affect him.

2*ly*. There is a change alſo in our Bodies. They are imployed in other ſervice than what they formerly were. Heretofore they were made uſe of to ſin, and were drudges to the Devil. Our great deſire was to pamper and delight them; if we eat and drank, it was for our own pleaſure, or to fit us for the injoyments of this World, and we had no regard to God in theſe Actions: But in Converſion 'tis otherwiſe; we are now ſenſible that we are to glorify God with our Bodies as well as with our Souls, and that both ſhould be imployed in the Service of him that made them. They now therefore preſent their Bodies to God, and uſe all the Members of it for his Service: So that this change is not only in the Soul, but in the Body alſo, and the whole Man is brought over to God.

Now all this is done by the mighty power of God. Though we are to ſtrive and labour in it, and have great incouragement ſo to do, yet without God's help all will be in vain: nor does God always bring this work about in the ſame way. Some he brings into great

great Horror, and for ſome time keeps them under it: He comes to others in a milder and gentler manner, and gives them hopes even at the firſt: but what courſe ſoever he takes in this Work, it comes to this at laſt, that they are throughly changed in heart and life, and their deſire and endeavour is to ſerve God, and do thoſe things that are pleaſing to him.

And by all it plainly appears that a great deal more is neceſſary to a ſound Converſion than Men generally imagin: for they are apt to think that to be ſober and temperate, to be juſt and honeſt, and the like, is all that is required of them: They will tell you that Men need not be ſo ſtrict in matters of Religion, and that there is very little difficulty in the way to Heaven, if rightly underſtood. But whatever ſuch may think, the Scripture teaches otherwiſe, and tells us of ſtriving, wreſtling, fighting, and giving all diligence: it ſets out the life of a Chriſtian in words that ſignify the greateſt labour and toil. But 'twere well if ſuch would examine from whence all their Virtue proceeds: Are not their good qualities ſuch as are ſutable to their natural temper, and become not their choice, but are even neceſſary to them? or are they not owing to their education? or do they not perform their actions to be ſeen of Men, and to be commended of them? Can they truly ſay that they have regard to God

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in whatever they do? that all proceeds from a holy fear of him, and love to him? and that they deſire to pleaſe and ſerve him in all they do? and have they reſpect to all the Commands of God? Is it their great care to keep themſelves from inward filthineſs as well as from outward? Is their love to God more than to any other thing, and do they place their whole truſt in him? Now all this is neceſſary to a ſtate of Grace; and if it be not thus within, their caſe is very bad notwithſtanding their fair out-ſide.

The 2*d* thing is, To propound ſome Motives or Arguments to Converſion.

And the firſt Argument is taken from the nature of Converſion, which is a turning from Satan to God. I ſhall therefore firſt ſhew what great reaſon we have to turn from Satan; and 2*ly*. What reaſon we have to turn to God.

1. What reaſon we have to turn from Satan. And ſurely it muſt needs be a miſerable thing to be Slaves and Drudges to ſo cruel a Maſter, who goes about continually ſeeking whom he may devour: He is always with us, and ready at every turn to inſnare us: He watches all opportunities for our ruin: His whole Buſineſs is to tempt us to ſin, and drag us to Hell; let us therefore with all ſpeed flee from him.

And

And let us in the 2*d* place turn to God. 'Tis he that has a moſt full right to us. If we conſider what it is that gives any one Authority over another, all this we ſhall find to be in God in the higheſt degree.

1. God hath the Authority of a King over us. And if our earthly Governours have a right to us, how much more hath God who is the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? 'tis he that has ſet our Rulers over us; and therefore he himſelf muſt needs have a title to us above all. Let him therefore rule us, whoſe right it is.

2. God has the Authority of a Father over us, and much more than any earthly Father can have over his Children. We do indeed owe reſpect and honour to our Parents, becauſe they are a means of bringing us into the World: But God in this reſpect is much more our Father; for 'tis he that makes uſe of our Parents to this end, and that appoints every Man a being in the World: And 'tis he that immediately forms our Souls, which is by much the better part of us. Another reaſon why we are to honour and obey our Parents, is, becauſe they maintain us and provide for us, and take the care of us when we are not able to help our ſelves. But are we not much more beholden to God on this account? for 'tis he that enables Parents to provide for their Children, and inclines them to it. So that 'tis by him that we are upheld

and

and preſerved: therefore he in the ſtricteſt ſenſe is our Father, for 'tis he that made us, and daily keeps us.

3. God has the Authority of a Maſter over us. And if an earthly Maſter has ſuch a right to his Servants, God has much more a right to us, for he is our chief Maſter; and the greateſt Maſter on earth has ſtill a Maſter in Heaven. If Servants are to be faithful Stewards of what their Maſters intruſt them with, much more are we bound to uſe for his Service whatever talents God has put into our hands. We ſee therefore in the whole how great a right God has to us, as a King, as a Father, and as a Maſter; how juſt is it therefore that we ſhould turn to him, and give up our ſelves to his Service?

Motive 2. God earneſtly calls and invites us to turn to him: *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?* And he ſends his Meſſengers on this errand, who are Ambaſſadors for Chriſt; as though God did beſeech us by them, they pray us in Chriſt's ſtead to be reconciled to God. And ſhall all this be to no purpoſe? Do we think that he does not intend well to us when he thus invites us, or that he does not know what is beſt for us? either of theſe is horrid to ſuppoſe: and yet this does every one that refuſes to come in at his call.

Motive 3.

Motive 3. 'Tis altogether neceſſary that you be converted if ever you be ſaved. *If any Man be in Chriſt*, that is, if any Man have a ſaving Intereſt in him, *he is a new Creature*, he muſt be renewed in heart and life. And how can we think that God will take any Man to Heaven, that has lived in diſobedience to him here on Earth? or ſhould admit thoſe into his preſence, that have bid him depart from them? that he ſhould ſhew the greateſt love to them, who have lived in conſtant hatred to him?

Motive 4. Converſion is a thing of the greateſt moment, and therefore requires our greateſt care: On this depends our eternal Welfare. This life is very ſhort, we are here to day and gone to morrow, 'tis no great matter therefore how 'tis with us for this ſmall ſpace of time: Our main care ſhould be that it may be well with us in that other ſtate, where we muſt abide to all eternity. Now if we turn to God, we are happy for ever; if we turn not, we are eternally miſerable: and can any thing be of greater moment to us than Converſion? for is it a ſmall matter to us whether we be ſaved or damned? Reſolve then that by the Grace of God you will ſpeedily ſet about it, ſeeing 'tis of ſo great concernment.

Motive 5. Conſider the miſeries of the Unconverted. If thou haſt any inward feeling, thy heart will ſmite thee, and thy Conſcience will be a torment to thee. But if thou ſhouldſt ſtop the mouth of thy Conſcience, and be at quiet, yet this is but a falſe peace, and thou art in a miſerable condition, though thou ſeeſt it not: For is it not a ſad thing to have God for thy Enemy, and to be continually under his Diſpleaſure? but eſpecially if we conſider what Wrath there is prepared for ungodly ones in another World, when they ſhall be baniſhed from the preſence of the bleſſed God, who is the fountain of all true Joy and Happineſs: and though they are not now ſenſible how great a Puniſhment this is, yet they ſhall feel it hereafter. And they ſhall not only be ſhut out from God, but ſhall lie under the moſt grievous tortures both of Soul and Body: They ſhall be filled with anguiſh, and horror, and deſpair, curſing themſelves and raging againſt God, delivered up to the greateſt fury and raving. Their Bodies alſo ſhall be moſt grievouſly tormented, continually ſcorching in the hotteſt fire, every part of them put to the moſt horrid torture. It muſt needs be very dreadful, when the offended God comes ſo furiouſly upon them, who is ſo able to deſtroy them: and that which makes it to be Hell indeed, is, that theſe torments will never end: after thouſands and millions of years, we are but where we were

were at firſt: God will preſerve them in their Beings, that they may be able to ſuffer the fierceſt of his Wrath. How ſhould all this affright us, and quicken us in fleeing from the Wrath to come! and this muſt be by turning to God.

Motive 6. Conſider the happineſs of them that turn to God: 1. Heaven will be the Portion of all ſuch. It is their Father's good pleaſure to give them a Kingdom, and ſuch a one as cannot be moved. Nothing is there wanting to make their happineſs compleat: They are always beholding the face of God, and rejoycing in him, and give all Power, Honour, and Glory to him. Here they behold their bleſſed Saviour, who receives them with the moſt tender embraces: they are admitted into the Company of the holy Angels, who rejoyced at their Converſion, and are much more glad to ſee them ſafe in Heaven. There ſhall they meet with all the Saints of God, and be perpetually rejoycing and ſhouting with them: We ſhall all be as full as we can hold, and yet never cloy'd; and when we are once brought hither, we ſhall go no more out, but ſhall be for ever with the Lord.

2. Yea their gracious God affords them very great Privileges here on earth: For as ſoon as they are heartily turned to God, their happineſs is begun: They belong to God and are of his Family, and their Names are written in

the Book of life: God has a tender regard to them, and continually watches over them, and ſometimes moſt fully diſcovers his love to them, and draws their Souls out eagerly towards himſelf; yea, the meaneſt of his Servants have ſuch a meaſure of his Grace as inclines them to love him above all things, and to chooſe him for their Portion. And they do ſo well approve of his Service, that they would not leave it for the whole World. How then ſhould this invite us to turn to God, and though we may have no preſent reliſh of theſe things, yet upon trial we ſhall taſte the ſweetneſs of them, and find to our everlaſting Comfort that God is a bountiful Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him and turn to him.

The third thing propounded was, To give Directions in this matter; and they are of two ſorts: 1. Such as are moſt general, and ſerve to prepare you for this Work. 2. Such as are to direct you in the Work it ſelf.

The Directions of the firſt ſort are theſe which follow;

1. Attend heedfully upon the Word. Be very diligent in the private reading of it: *Search the Scriptures, for in them you have eternal life.* You ought alſo carefully to attend upon the publick preaching it: this is the means which God generally uſes for the bringing in of thoſe whom he has choſen to eternal

nal life: every time you go to the hearing of it, beg that God would ſpeak home to you.

2. Reſiſt not the Spirit of God ſtriving with you. By his Spirit he comes within you, he urges and beſeeches you; and can you refuſe and ſhut him out? Whenever therefore thou art awakened, and findeſt thy ſelf moving towards God, this thou mayſt ſuppoſe to be the gracious whiſpers of his Spirit; liſten to them, and indeavour to make the beſt of them.

3. Set ſpeedily about this work. Take the preſent time, and don't imagin that any other will be more convenient: the longer you delay, the more unlikely it is that you ſhould do it, and the more difficult 'twill be if ever you ſet about it.

4. Adviſe with ſome Friend whom you may depend upon for his skill and faithfulneſs, and be not aſhamed to diſcover your ſelf fully to him: for if you do it by halves, his Counſel may be hurtful to you inſtead of doing good.

5. Conſider beforehand what it will coſt you to be religious. Reckon upon it that you muſt meet with many hardſhips and croſſes, and that there is much labour and ſelf-denyal required of you: and if you do not allow for this beforehand, you will find your ſelf diſappointed, and when you meet with troubles will be apt to turn back.

6. But then conſider what incouragement you have to be religious notwithſtanding all theſe difficulties. Though your Work be hard, yet through God's help you will be able to go through it, and he has promiſed to his own that he will never leave them nor forſake them. And though there be much labour and pains required, yet there is alſo much pleaſure in it; in the beating down and conquering your Luſts there is much delight: yea when you ſuffer for Religion, there is matter for rejoycing, for great is your reward in Heaven: ſo that the true Servants of God, though they are ſorrowing, yet they are always rejoycing.

7. Forſake all evil Company. Nothing will be ſo great a hindrance to thee as bad Company; ſhun them therefore, and reſolve thou wilt never have to do with them. Tell them once for all, that thou art reſolved to change thy courſe, and that you muſt part unleſs they will go with you in the way to Heaven: and who knows but that through the bleſſing of God this may be a means to reclaim them? but if it ſhould not prove ſo, yet this is the likelieſt way to get rid of them, for when they ſee that you are fully bent for God, they will be glad to keep from you, for your ſtrict life will continually gall and vex them.

8. Let not the greatneſs and number of your Sins diſcourage you. God hath invited

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the greateſt Sinners to come in, and aſſured them of mercy and pardon if they turn to him: *Iſa.*55. 9. *Let the Wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy on him.* We are not to meaſure God by our ſelves: for though we find it hard to forgive injuries, yet God's thoughts are not our thoughts, his Mercy is without bounds. Beſides, Chriſt ſhed his Blood for the greateſt Sinners, and we may be ſure that his Blood which is ſo exceeding precious, is of ſufficient value to procure pardon for them: Though therefore we have been never ſo great offenders, yet if we turn to God we ſhall find Mercy.

9. Carry on this work throughout. Leave it not half done: There may be many difficulties in Converſion; but if ever you go to Heaven, it muſt be this way. Do not therefore flag and faint, but ſtrengthen thy reſolution, and bring the work to ſome good iſſue, how difficult ſoever it may be. 'Twould be a ſad thing for thee to look back when thou art in the other World, and find how near thou didſt come to the Kingdom of God, but yet didſt come ſhort: ſpeedily therefore begin, and with full purpoſe carry on this work, begging, that *he who hath begun a good Work in thee, would perform it to the day of Chriſt.*

The 2*d* ſort of Directions is to guide you in the Work it ſelf, and in what manner you are to ſet about it; and they are theſe which follow:

1. The firſt thing in order to this great Work is Conſideration. 'Tis for want of this that ſo many run headlong to deſtruction: How can you know your caſe if you conſider not what it is? and how can you leave your courſe till you conſider the danger and folly of it? Don't think to excuſe your ſelf from this Duty by pleading your weakneſs and ignorance: but what though you are not of ſo great underſtanding as ſome are, yet has not God made you a reaſonable Creature, and given you the power of thinking? Can you not ſay to your ſelf, How ſad and woful is my caſe, if I continue in it! how certainly will it end in my utter ruin! but there is ſtill hope for me if I turn to God. In matters of this world we can conſider things, and bend our minds to them, and judg what is fitteſt to be done; and why can't we uſe our reaſon in the matters of our Souls? That underſtanding therefore which God has given thee, uſe it to the beſt purpoſe, and for the greateſt concerns, and doubt not but God will help thee in it; and therefore,

2. Pray earneſtly to God, and beg that he would direct you in the whole. It may be thou haſt been an utter ſtranger to this Duty, and thinkeſt thou art not able to perform the

leaſt part of it. 'Tis indeed a great ſhame that thou haſt ſo much neglected it, and it makes the Duty much more difficult to perform; but if thou haſt any real ſenſe of thy ſad condition, thou wilt bemoan it, and be in ſome meaſure able to cry to God for help: as the poor beggar is ſo affected with his miſerable ſtate, that he can ſet out his caſe with much readineſs, and beg relief. And if you in earneſt ſet about it, 'tis not ſo difficult as you imagine; for can you not confeſs your Sins to God, and humbly ask his pardon of them for his Son's ſake? Cannot you beg his Grace to mortify and ſubdue them, to lead a new life, and become a new Creature? 'Tis very poſſible for you to apply your ſelf to God in this or the like manner: ſtir up your ſelf therefore, and ſet about it, and the Lord will be with you.

3. Look back into thy life, and take a particular account of it. Go as far backward as thou canſt remember, and call to mind thy moſt early Sins, and bring it by degrees to thy preſent time: By this means thou wilt more eaſily bring to thy thoughts thoſe ſeveral Sins which in thy whole life thou haſt been guilty of. And by this thou wilt find that thou haſt been guilty of many Sins which thou ſcarcely thoughtſt to be ſuch, yea that thy whole life has been little elſe but Sin.

4. When thou haſt brought thy Sins to mind, then indeavour to ſtir up thy ſelf to

a Godly ſorrow for them. Think ſeriouſly what a vile Wretch thou haſt been: every ſingle Sin is exceedingly provoking, it being committed againſt the Great God; what then have thy Sins deſerved, which have been ſo very many, and which have been acted over and over again continually? And by thy daily diſobedience, thou haſt ſhewed the greateſt contempt and ſcorn of him, who juſtly requires the higheſt fear and reverence. Conſider further that 'tis he that has preſerved thee, and hitherto has kept thee out of Hell; and is this the requital thou haſt made to him? Further yet, thou haſt ſinn'd againſt thy Knowledg and the checks of thy Conſcience, the reproofs of thy Miniſter, or other Friends; thou haſt ſinn'd againſt the calls of God to thee, and haſt been ſo wilfully bent in thy courſe, that nothing could turn thee back. Surely when thou ſeriouſly thinkeſt of all this, thou canſt not but own thy ſelf to be a moſt vile Wretch, and exceeding guilty before God.

5. Confeſs thy Sins to God in the moſt particular manner, yea let every one thou canſt call to mind be ſingly confeſſed to him. Declare to him alſo as fully as thou canſt, how grievous thy Sins have been, and in how foul a manner committed by thee: and then earneſtly beg of him to make thee truly ſenſible of them, to affect thy Heart deeply with them, and to work in thee the greateſt ſhame,

and

and ſorrow, and loathing of thy ſelf.

6. Reſt upon the Merits of Chriſt alone for the pardon of your Sins: Think not that any thing of your own can in the leaſt procure your acceptance with God. Men are too apt to overvalue their own performances, as if there were ſome real worth in them, and they were pleaſing to God as coming from themſelves. But let every one beware of this, and abhor the thoughts of it: For ſuppoſe we could come fully up to our duty, ſurely we can deſerve nothing by doing that which we are bound to. But when we conſider how weak and ſinful our beſt duties are, we have no reaſon to be proud, but to be aſhamed of them; for they are ſo far from procuring our pardon, that they do but increaſe our guilt. But thanks be to God for Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe office it is to preſent our Services to him, and make them acceptable. Let us therefore turn to God with all our hearts, and rely wholly upon the Merits of our Saviour.

7. Come to a full reſolution. The caſe before you is very plain: It's whether you will ſerve God or the Devil, whether you will go to Heaven or Hell: and methinks 'tis very eaſy to judg which of theſe you ought to chooſe. Reſolve therefore that whatever others do, you will ſerve the Lord. Cleave to him with a moſt full purpoſe of heart: endeavour earneſtly to conquer and ſubdue every

every Luſt, labour diligently to attain every Grace; watch and pray continually.

8. Enter into a ſolemn Covenant with God. Bind your ſelf to him by the ſtrongeſt Vows; deliver up your ſelf wholly to him by a moſt free and full promiſe: but let this be done a ſenſe of your own weakneſs, beg earneſtly of him that he would ſtrengthen you, and enable you to pay your Vows. After this you ought frequently to renew your Covenant with him, and eſpecially at the Lord's Supper, where Chriſt ſo freely gives himſelf to you, and you fully reſign up your ſelves to him.

9. When you are brought into this happy ſtate, endeavour to live anſwerably to it, and to walk as thoſe that have not received the Grace of God in vain: you are now under the greateſt ingagements, and every Sin you now commit is greatly heightened: you are now convinced of the great evil of Sin, and have ſtrongly ingaged your ſelf againſt it; you cannot now ſin at ſo cheap a rate as formerly. Look therefore diligently to your ways, walk in the fear and in the love of God: *Be not weary of well do ing, for you ſhall reap if you faint not.*

FINIS.

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